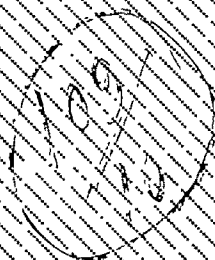
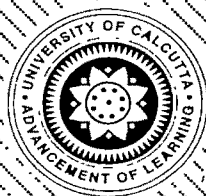


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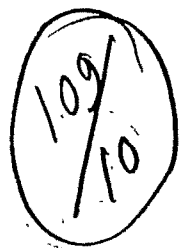
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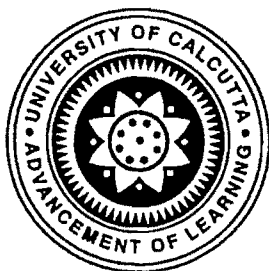
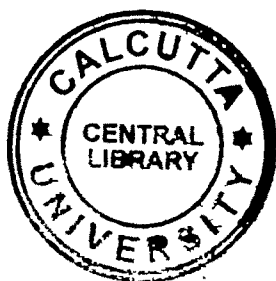
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EDITORIAL

The present volume of the Journal of the Department of Anthropology is a collection of research articles contributed by the research scholars and faculty members of the Department of Anthropology of different universities and under graduate colleges. The research articles published in this volume reflect the endeavour of the scholars to explore new domain in Anthropological research. The volume consists of 17 articles covering a wide range of contemporary issues and problems.

The first paper (**article 1**) of this volume is on *A study on the evolutionary biology of hair medullation in primates*. In this article the authors (Chatterjee *et al.*) have attempted to demonstrate the significance of hair medullation in hominid evolution. The next article (**article 2**) is *An ethnographic study of growing localization of culture of fast food in a city adjacent to Kolkata metropolis*. Here the authors (Saha *et al.*) have explored the narratives of the both consumers and entrepreneurs of fast food in everyday life of middle class people at the periphery of Kolkata metropolis. The next article (**article 3**) is on health and nutrition entitled *Body mass index and excess adiposity*. In this article Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh argued about the efficacy of body mass index to estimate obesity based on different cut off values and Youden's index. The **Article 4** is also an ethnographic study on health care practices of the people living in the northern part of Kolkata metropolis. The authors (Banerjee *et al.*) have focused on how the pharmaceutical companies through sales promotion and unethical means lower the benefit of the patients from local health care practices. The article by Das and Bose (**article 5**) is on *Assessment of undernutrition among Bauri preschool children of Nitura Block, Purulia District, West Bengal, India*. This is a community based cross sectional study aimed to find out the nutritional status of the preschool children of Bauri community with the help of some anthropometric data. The study reveals that the nutritional condition of the children of this community is not satisfactory.

It is well established that coronary heart disease (CHD) is highly associated with the intake of calorie or less expenditure of calorie. In other words, CHD is highly associated with obesity. But, are the risk scores associated with CHD and obesity the same? The **Article 6** of this volume entitled *A study on the association between risk score of CHD and obesity measures*, authored by Chatterjee *et al.* seeks answer of this issue. Industrialisation has certainly affected a number of traditional occupational types and handloom is one such traditional economy in India. In this context, the paper (**article 7**) of Banerjee *et al.* entitled *The weavers and their woes: A study on the problems, of the traditional weavers living at the urban margins of West Bengal* addresses the issue of a weaving community of a particular district of West Bengal. The research has identified a number of factors which estranged these weavers from their traditional economy. The article of Nath *et al.* (**article 8**) is centered around the famous *Kolkata Boimela* (Kolkata book fair). Here the authors have explored the peoples' participation, perception, celebration and reinforcement of identity as reflected in their modes of ritualistic and innovative consumption of this customary and

yet exceptionally renewable space of culture called *Boimela*. The **Article 9** entitled *A study on potato farming and problems of a section of the potato farmers in West Bengal* (authored by Makal and Das) is another ethnographic study based on the potato farming with respect to knowledge, practices and problems among the potato farmers of a particular locale in the Gangetic plane of West Bengal. Chakraborty and Ghosal in their article entitled *Religion among the Hos of West Singhbhum, Jharkhand: A study on continuity and change* (**article 10**) have portrayed the changes in the religious beliefs of a tribal community because of Hindu influence. The next article (**article 11**) is on *Tribal education and development in Birbhum district (W.B.): With particular reference to the Santals of rural and urban areas*. In this article the author (Sen Chowdhury) concluded that overall educational level of the Santals is low and significant rural-urban difference exists among them. The article of Shaw *et al.* (**article 12**) has touched upon two significant areas-social exclusion and gerontology. In their article *Facing exclusion at aging: An ethnographic profile of the elderly people in an old home in Kolkata metropolis*, the authors have put forward the construal of the elderly towards their exclusion from their families and their participation in the local social setting in an old home. The article (**article 13**) of Goswami and Das addresses the issue of sexuality and health of sex workers. In their research entitled *A brief address to the dimension of sexuality and health of the sex workers at the margin of Kolkata Metropolis*, the authors described the aspects of risk behaviour, practices, awareness and perception of sexuality of the sex workers and their clients. The **Article 14** again encompasses the issue of sexuality but, here the study group is the long distance truckers. The authors (Hazra *et al.*) in their article *Tracking the dimensions of sexuality of the truckers: A study on the long-distance truckers from four provinces of India* have focused on the relationship between the culture of sexuality of the truckers and the intervention programmes of safe sex. The next article (**article 15**) is also on another dimension of sexuality, and is entitled *The identities of gendered sexual subjectivity: A report on the MSM performances in the networks of the Kothis in urban West Bengal*. In this article Dey *et al.* emphasized on the emergence of sub/categories within kothi network of gendered sexual performances of the MSM population in an urban setting of West Bengal. The next article (**article 16**) is also on 'identity' issue but, the context is different. The author of this research (Roy) entitled *(Re)mooring identity and negotiating salience: An ethnographic profile of the Tamil settlers in a city of West Bengal* has explored the process by which the Tamil Brahman at an urban locality of West Bengal has been able to maintain their own identity. The last article (**article 17**) is by Dey Mullick, entitled *Caste, space, symbols and power: A study of the Brahman and other castes in an urban Enclave of West Bengal*. This article also looks into the issue of 'identity' of members of a caste group in a cultural space at a peripheral metropolis of Kolkata.

I am optimistic that this volume will be a helpful and important reference for the scholars in future course of research.

Subha Ray

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A STUDY ON EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY OF HAIR MEDULLATION IN PRIMATES

Madhumati Chatterjee¹, Sudesna Chanda²,
Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay³ and Jyoti Ratan Ghosh⁴

Abstract: Comparative genomics, population genetics, gene-expression analyses in terms of histomorphological studies along with quantitative traits have begun to make complementary inroads into the complex genetic architecture of human evolution. In order to understand the evolutionary features and variation between non-human primates and human investigation of hair histomorphological variables in terms of medullation has been taken into consideration. Present study attempts to demonstrate the significance of hair medullation in evolutionary biology in hominid evolution.

INTRODUCTION

Like other organs and parts of animal body, hair has also a range of diversity and the microscopic details of hair strands offer certain definite and variable features as well. These are found to be useful for the purpose of identification. Hair is a unique character found on all mammals, but not on other animals, where it plays a crucial role in the retention of heat within these homoeotherms and presumably contributed significantly to the rapid radiation of mammals and their rise to become the dominant terrestrial vertebrate (Maderson, 2003). An interesting event in hair evolution has been its loss in humans (Schwartz *et al.* 1981, Wheeler 1984). The magnitude and rate of morphological evolution in hominids suggests that many independent and incremental developmental changes have occurred that, on the basis of recent findings in model animals are expected to be polygenic and regulatory in nature. Comparative genomics, population genetics, gene-expression analyses in terms of histomorphological studies along with quantitative traits have begun to make complementary inroads into the complex genetic architecture of human evolution (Carroll, 2003). Although the influence of trans- and cis-regulatory mutations is well known, the genome-wide impact of changes in genomic neighborhood of genes on expression divergence between species remains largely unexplored (De *et al.* 2009).

Primates and especially humans show a number of morphological features that set them apart from other species. Many of these, such as enlarged brain, upright posture, opposable thumb and reduced face, pertain to evolutionary changes in the nervous system and the skeletal system. It is therefore reasonable to postulate that development genes involved in the patterning of the nervous and skeletal systems might have played important roles in the evolution of primate- or human-specific phenotypes (Olson *et al.* 2003, Gilbert *et al.* 2005.). With rapid

¹Research Student, Department of Anthropology, UCSTA, University of Calcutta

²Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Bidhannagar Government College, Kolkata

³Professor, Department of Anthropology, UCSTA, University of Calcutta

⁴Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, PSV, Visva-Bharati

progress in human genetics, comparative genomics, and molecular evolution, the genetic basis of these differences has begun to be unraveled. For example, the conserved transcriptional factor FOXP2 is required for speech development in humans (Wang *et al.* 2006). Compared to amino acid replacements in FOXP2 gene, gains and losses are more dramatic genetic changes (Li *et al.* 2005).

The “less-is-more” hypothesis (Olson 1999) is particularly intriguing for human evolution, as several human gene losses have been proposed to provide opportunities for adaptations and be responsible for human-specific phenotypes (Olson *et al.* 2003). For example, the pseudogenization of ϕ hHaA type I hair keratin gene inactivation in humans and the expression analyses of the encoded cHaA and gHaA hair keratins served to highlight dramatic differences between the hair keratin phenotypes of contemporary humans and the great apes (Winter *et al.* 2001) as well as thought to be one of the strongest reason for localization of hair in human.

Hair as an ectodermal part of the body could also be taken into account for understanding the evolutionary process. The hair follicle represent one of the few organs of the body which throughout life, undergoes alternating cycles of growth, senescence and rest (Stenn *et al.* 2001). Morphologically, the hair follicle is composed of external epithelial compartments, the outer and inner root sheaths, the companion layer and a central hair fiber forming (trichocytic) compartment, comprising the matrix, cuticle and cortex. Occasionally, a centrally lying medulla is present in specific hair types. Growth of the hair originates in matrix cells located in the bulb of the hair follicle. This hair bulb surrounds a dermal fibroblast condensate, termed the dermal papilla, which is important for hair follicle morphogenesis.

The main structural proteins of the hair fiber are the hair keratins (Arin *et al.* 2009) and the hair keratin associated proteins, KAP, the latter being encoded by a large number of multigene families (Powell *et al.* 1997). Hair keratins, a subset of the large keratin family whose members are found in all cells of epithelial origin (Fuchs *et al.* 1994) represent two multigene families, the type I (acidic) and type II (basic) families which comprise 15 members in humans (Rogers *et al.* 2000). Thus, it is quite relevant to note the histological variations of human and non-human primate hair in terms of different morphological, histological and quantitative variations.

Morphological characteristics of human head hair had been utilized as a criterion for the study of racial differentiation by a number of naturalists since the beginning of 17th century. Besides morphological characters hair possesses some histological features and the three major histological components of hair is the shaft, the medulla and the cuticle

These histological characters of human scalp hair were successfully used for personal identification (Hausman, 1934; Banerjee 1963; Glaister, 1953; Gradwhole, 1954; Taupin, 2004) and as well as in population variation in global context (McMichael, 2003) and Indian context (Chanda and Bandyopadhyay 2006; Gaur *et al.* 2007).

Association of the medullary types with different hair forms has been studied by Garn (1946) and Banerjee (1963). A direct correlation between hair forms and medullary types has not been found out as yet but highest incidence of the absence of medulla has been

A Study on Evolutionary Biology of Hair Medullation in Primates

found in the frizzly and the wooly hair, while the highest incidence of continuous medulla has been observed in the straight hair. In human hair, very little is known about the substructures relating to the curl pattern. The interpretation of the macroscopic shape of the fiber at the molecular and cellular scales is still unclear (Thibaut *et al.* 2007). Comparative and multiscale study accentuated intrinsic asymmetry in the proliferative compartment and hence caused delayed differentiation of both inner (medulla) and outer root sheaths (cortex). Therefore, the differential hair shape of the hair shaft seems to result from the asymmetric differentiation of the precortex and programmed from the bulb and is linked to asymmetry in differentiation programmes (Thibaut *et al.* 2005).

In the field of evolutionary biology species identification through hair samples has gained much importance. During the last decades a number of works has been conducted on mammalian and as well as primate hair for identification and taxonomic purpose (Khenelevskaya, 1965; Rosen, 1971). Although recently, evolutionary study on non-human primates based on morphological and behavioral characters, has been conducted (Schwartz *et al.* 1981; Haimoff *et al.* 1982; Van Tuinen *et al.* 1983; Wood and Richmond, 2000; Kolmanovskii, 2002; Raichlen, 2004; Marroig *et al.* 2004). But studies regarding the micromorphological in terms of histomorphological and quantitative variations of non-human primates from India are yet to be done.

Thus for execution of the above mentioned proposal the scalp hair of human and hair of non human primates were examined in the present research work with regard to variation in the observation in the types of medullation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials for the present study consist of the hair samples of human and non human primates. Scalp hairs from 60 individuals (25 from each) from adult Bengalee population (Male 30 and female 30) and head hair strands from 4 adult non human primate species (25 hair strands from each subjects) were taken for the present study. In adult human 25 hair strands from each individuals were obtained by cutting a bunch of hair from as nearly possible as the root level from the occipital zone of the scalp. The collected hairs were kept in serially marked paper envelopes separately. Among the non-human primates there were 4 species. From each species 25 hair strands were taken from each sex. There were altogether 175 hair strands from non-human primates. Thus the total number of hair strands was 1675 in the present study.

The non-human primate samples were collected from the different zoological gardens of India with the help of the concerned officials of the zoo. The names of the different species are as follows:

- *Loris tardigradus* (Suborder: Prosimian, Family: Lorisidae)
- *Macaca assamensis* (Suborder: Anthropoidea, Family: Cercopithecidae) (Old world monkey-OWM)
- *Cebus albifrons* (Suborder: Anthropoidea, Family: Cebidae) (New world monkey-NWM)
- *Pan troglodytes troglodytes* (Suborder: Anthropoidea, Family: Pongidae-Ape).

For cleaning, hair samples were first dipped into the solution of carbon tetra chloride (CCl_4) for at least 24 hours. This was sufficient cleaning for human scalp hair (Sen *et al.* 2001). However, non-human primate hair samples were further dipped into the solution of Ether & Alcohol (1:1 proportion) for at least 30 minutes (Banerjee and Das Chaudhuri 1965) and subsequently, were dried at room temperature for the examination of the histomorphological characters. For microscopical study of histomorphological variables i.e. hair medullation each washed hair strand was mounted on microscopic glass slides with 40 x ocular microscope (Binoculour: Letiz, WETZLAR, Germany) with 0.65 objective resolutions

To study the incidences of medullation a threefold classification of medulla (Banerjee; 1960, 1963, 1965), i.e., Absent, Continuous and Discontinuous was followed. **Absent**—In this case medulla was absent throughout the shaft (Figure 1). **Continuous**—In this incidence medulla was continuously present from the root to the tip without any breakage (Figure 2). **Discontinuous**—In this case there are breakage in the medullary column (Figure 3).

Data were analyzed in SPSS 10.0 (Windows) version and cut of point was set as $p < 0.05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of incidences of medullation has been presented in Table 1. Sexual dimorphism with regard to incidences of medullation within the species has not been found in the present study. It would be apparent from the table that the Prosimian, family Lorisidae (Species *Loris tardigradus*) and New World Monkey, family Cebidae (Species *Cebus albifrons*) (commonly known as *Capuchins*) did not reveal continuous and absent form of medullation except discontinuous form of medullation. On the other hand, the Old World Monkey, Cercopithecidae family (Species *Macaca assamensis*) demonstrated continuous and discontinuous form of medullation and devoid of any absent form of medullation in both sexes. However, the ape, family Pongidae (Species *Pan troglodytes troglodytes*) and human, family hominidae revealed all forms of medullation i.e. discontinuous, continuous and absent in the both the sexes.

Examination of evolutionary biology in terms of forms of medullation revealed the discontinuous form for all the primate groups including human (Figure 4). Clustering of continuous medullation has been demonstrated among all the suborders of Anthropoidea except the family Cebidae (OWM) represented by *Cebus albifrons*. However, the form of absent medullation was demonstrated by the family Pongidae represented by *Pan troglodytes troglodytes* and family Hominidae represented by human samples under the suborder Anthropoidea.

Comparison of differential pattern of hair medullation revealed significant ($p < 0.05$) variation between *Loris tardigradus* and *Homo sapiens*. Similar result in terms of significant ($p < 0.05$) variation with regard to differential pattern of hair medullation has been found between Monkeys (*Cebus albifrons* and *Macaca assamensis*) and human. On the other hand the ape sample (*Pan troglodytes troglodytes*) did not demonstrated significant variation in hair medullation with human. It would be apparent from the clustering approach of hair medullation (Figure 4) that continuous medullation has been demonstrated by Cercopithecidae family, Pongidae family and hominidae family. Examination on the form of medullation, not

A Study on Evolutionary Biology of Hair Medullation in Primates

only revealed similarity in the distribution of continuous and discontinuous medullation among the Pongidae family and hominidae family but also in the presence of absent form of medullation among them.

Since, Hair is a complex “cornified” multicellular tissue composed of cuticle and cortex cells mechanically acting as a whole. The cuticle cells overlap and cortex cells interdigitate, all cells being composed of different morphological elements and separated by the cell membrane complex. The cell membrane complex (CMC) and the morphological elements of the cortex cells, the macrofibrils, composed of microfibrils or intermediate filaments (IFs), and the intermacrofibrillar and intermicrofibrillar cement or the amorphous matrix material determine the mechanical properties of hair (Popescu *et al.* 2009). Therefore it is most likely that the cell membranes of hair cuticle cells are also markedly different from the cell membranes of cortical cells. Models with supporting evidence are presented for the three different types of cell membrane complex: cuticle-cuticle cell membrane complex, cuticle cortex cell membrane complex, and cortex-cortex cell membrane complex (Robbins *et al.* 2003). In view of aforesaid presentation the present study attempted to study evolution and variation in histomorphological and quantitative characters of primate head hair among the non-human primates along with human samples.

The results on histomorphological study on medullation demonstrated that there was variation in the pattern of medullation. A three fold classification (Continuous, Discontinuous and Absent) model (Banerjee, 1965) has been taken into consideration for the present study. Interestingly it was noted that the phylogenetic position of the primate species e.g. *Loris tardigradus* and *Cebus albifrons* who are not considered as the direct sequence of hominid evolution had only discontinuous form of medullation. On the other hand, continuous medullation has been found consistently in *Macaca assamensis* which is included in family Cercopithecidae and as well as in family pongidae and hominidae (Figure 4). It would be also apparent that the absent form of medullation has only been found in somewhat similarity between family pongidae and hominidae with consistent distribution of all forms of medullation among themselves.

Researches on evolutionary biology of hair keratin analysis also envisaged on the basis of the synaptic and cytoplasmic morphology of nerve terminals innervating outer hair cells using serial section Transmission Electron Microscopy. Majority of all outer hair cells were innervated by terminals with reciprocal synapses and reciprocal synapses occur in sufficient numbers to be physiologically significant in primates (Thiers *et al.* 2002). Therefore, it is most likely, human hair samples could have the potential for all kinds of variation in medullation. Subsequently, in the present study human samples demonstrated almost all kinds of medullation pattern with more discontinuous types of medullation. Although the study of human hair, medulla is the less studied structure because it is believed that it has no influence on the fibre properties but recent research with advance technology like SEM (Scanning Electron Microscopy) and TEM (Transmission Electron Microscopy) also vindicated three medulla subunits observed in cry fractured samples (de Cássia *et al.* 2007) which is

corroborative with the present study. In the present attempted it has been revealed that the Cercopithecidae and ape group demonstrated both the form of discontinuous and continuous form of medullation in both the sexes, while human and the ape samples has been noticed with wide range of variation might be due to the relative numbers of synonymous and non-synonymous substitutions in the phihHaA (the human type I hair keratin gene cluster pseudogene) and cHaA (functional orthologous genes of chimpanzee) genes, as inferred by using the gHaA (functional orthologous genes of gorilla) gene as an outgroup. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the human hHaA gene was inactivated only recently and suggests that human keratin-associated protein 1 family genes may have arisen mainly through gene duplication of the cysteine-repeat motifs during evolution. (Shimomura *et al.* 2003).

The cardinal feature of the present study revealed the significance of different form hair medullation as histomorphological trait to study the evolutionary biology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Table 1. Distribution of different form of medullation in non-human primates and Human

Family/Species	Continuous		Discontinuous		Absent		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Prosimian/Lorisidae/ <i>Loris tardigradus</i>	-	-	50	100	-	-	50
Anthropoidea/Cebidae/ <i>Cebus albifrons</i>	-	-	25	100	-	-	25
Anthropoidea/Cercopithecidae/ <i>Macaca assamensis</i>	37	74	13	26	-	-	50
Anthropoidea/Pongidae/ <i>Pan troglodytes troglodytes</i>	13	26	33	66	4	8	50
Anthropoidea/Hominidae/ <i>Homo sapiens</i>	367	24.5	1006	67.1	127	8.4	1500

A Study on Evolutionary Biology of Hair Medullation in Primates

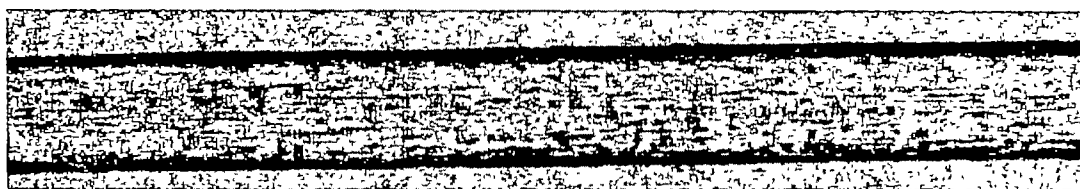


Figure 1

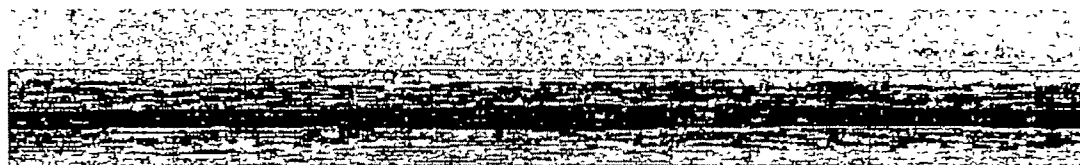


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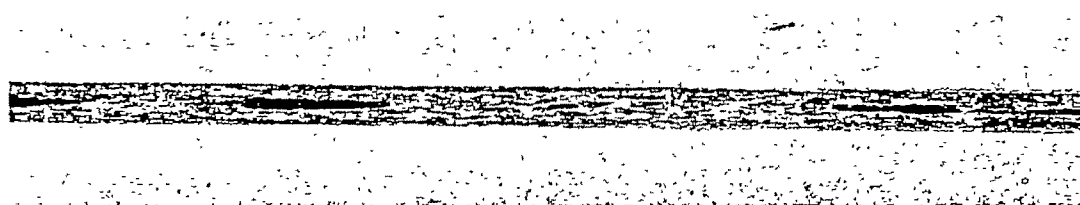
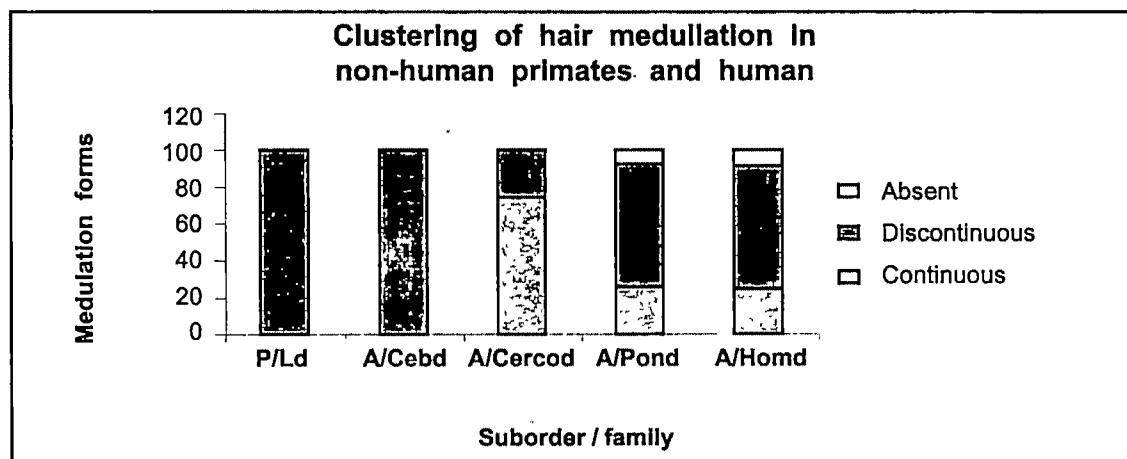


Figure 3



P/Ld—Prosimian/Lorisidae/*Loris tardigradus*

A/Cebd—Anthropoidea/Cebidae/*Cebus albifrons*

A/Cercod—Anthropoidea/Cercopithecidae/*Macaca assamensis*

A/Pond—Anthropoidea/Pongidae/*Pan troglodytes*

A/Homd—Anthropoidea/Hominidae/*Homo sapiens*

Figure 4

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Address for correspondence: Dr. Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay, Professor, Department of Anthropology, UCSTA, University of Calcutta, 35, Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.
E-mail: arup_cu@rediffmail.com

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF GROWING LOCALISATION OF CULTURE OF *FAST FOOD* IN A CITY ADJACENT TO KOLKATA METROPOLIS

Amrita Saha¹, Sutapa Mukhopadhyay², Arnab Das³,
Suman Nath⁴ and Priyadareshini Sengupta⁵

Abstract: The present paper is an articulation of 'fast food' practices in a residential part of a city situated beside Kolkata metropolis. With a view to understanding the responses of local urban Bengalis to the growing culture of 'fast food' in a period of globalisation the paper covers interpretations of both the producers and the consumers. The focus was on the competing strategies of the entrepreneurs in fast food business to reach more consumers and the criteria of responses of the consumers. From an ethnographic study of nine months at the settings of fast food services in the Indian city of an Indian province, the paper selected the following objectives, which needed an articulation: (a) the local categories of fast food; (b) the localisation, authenticity and value-addition to fast food by entrepreneurial service and consumers' choices and (c) social relations, everyday life and culture of tastes of consumers bringing in the differential expansion and internalisation of fast food in the local culture of different generations, gender and social roles. The articulation of the selected narrations of the insiders, typically relevant to the themes of fast food practices helped the paper to emerge from the lived experiences of the city dwellers.

Keywords: Fast Food, Urban, Tastes, Consumer, Ethnography, India.

INTRODUCTION

The scarcity of anthropological monographs on food systems, even with respect to the 'cultures' of either 'primitives' or 'civilized' persists till date. Audrey Richards's (1939) work on Northern Rhodesia still remains the pioneering model for the field. Moore & Vaughan (1994) as worthy successors of Richard's work nicely broadened and enriched the details of the food-ways of the same people adding the historical dimension in their ethnographic analysis. Similarly mentionable are Ikpe's (1994) history of food systems in Nigeria (1994) and Anigbo's (1987) ethnography of commensality among the Igbo. The effects of broad societal changes on eating patterns, and vice versa, gained some increasing interest to ethnographers (Harris & Ross 1987, Pelto & Vargas 1992, Macbeth 1997, Lentz 1999, Wu & Tan 2001, Cwiartka & Walraven 2002).

There are some ethnographic reflections on the relationship between change and food; ethnographic literature on post-Soviet dietary patterns is limited but promising; C^aglar addresses changes in the marketing of Turkish fast-food in Germany after the fall of the Berlin

¹Research Student in Anthropology, University of Calcutta

²Lecturer (in Senior Scale), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

³Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Haldia Govt. College, West Bengal

⁵Lecturer (in Senior Scale), Department of Anthropology, Bangabasi College, Kolkata

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Wall (C^aglar 1999); anthropologists studied studying the interplay between the capitalists and consumers in Trinidad's sweet drink industry (Miller 1997); there studies on the refinement of packaging to entice consumption (Hine 1995), the role of modern advertising and marketing in dietary change (Cwierka 2000), how the global actually reestablishing the local identity, rather than supplanting it (James 1994). All these take us to local-global arena of ethnographers' developing attention to 'fast food'.

FAST FOOD

Emerson defines fast food as

"... a customer serving himself at a counter where food that has already been cooked in advance is offered" (1979:34).

Lundberg almost similarly states that

"... fast food means quick service—the food is already prepared and being held, or fried or grilled quickly, or reheated by microwave. As distinguished from the coffee shop, its near relative, fast food typically offers no table service and few menu choices" (1984:237).

Hayes (1993) defines fast food in terms of the establishments that offer minimal levels of in-store service, selling lower priced foods with speedy service in a relatively inexpensive atmosphere designed for fast turn-over of customers. All of the above definitions may appear not completely applicable to the locally franchised diverse growth of fast-food for this work since they do not include the emerged Indian-style fast food commerce and behaviour in all segments. Anthropologists have long pointed out that for consumers meaning is attached to their own behavior and the goods they obtain. In *Culture and Consumption* McCracken proposes an excellent theoretical perspective for understanding objects and their place in the culture of consumption. McCracken argues that consumer goods embody and communicate significant cultural meaning and that this meaning is constantly in flux of changes to consumer goods, and finally to the individual consumer. McCracken explains how meaning is transferred through different instruments. Advertising, fashion system, and consumer behavior all work to invest goods with meaning that can be transferred to different cultural locations—the world, the product, and the consumer. In our everyday life emphasizing on culture, "the phenomenal world presents itself to the individual's senses fully shaped and constituted by the beliefs and assumptions of his/her culture" (McCracken, 1986:72). Various categories make up our phenomenal world (e.g., time, space, environment), but the categories created by our society—social class, status, gender, age, and occupation—are the ones that influence our consumption behavior in the highest degree. This perspective is very useful for the analysis of fast food restaurants since we intend to explore the meanings the business of fast food embody for their customers.

In the high culture of international food, the term 'inauthentic' (or not genuine), Nandy (2004: 11) subscribes to two usual meanings—compromises made with the taste of those who do not belong to the ethnic cuisine for commercial or other reasons extraneous to local taste, and compromises made with recipes to cope with the unavailability or paucity of ingredients. Such a concept of authenticity presumes the existence of boundaries that are

difficult to associate with Indian food. First, as far as food is concerned, India can claim to be, by far, the most diverse society in the world. Not merely that: Indians have borrowed heavily, unashamedly and openly virtually from every corner of the globe. The story of Indian food is often the story of the blatantly exogenous becoming prototypically authentic. Many food items that seem Indian came to India late in the day. Of course, there are always a few ultra-nationalists who claim that these preparations and ingredients are Indian and the foreigners, either dishonestly or out of ignorance, consider them to be originally theirs. Nandy adds again (2204:12):

As urbanization and industrialization speed up in India and the country's political economy moves towards an arrangement more compatible with globalized capitalism, the fast-food market, too, has expanded dramatically. A sizeable section of urban India now senses the need for something like fast food. However, the formulaic concept of fast food has not made deep inroads in urban awareness. A very large proportion of the clientele of fast food still do not identify such food as a genre, with its specific limitations and problems. In India, one rarely finds nutritionists or columnists on food lamenting the growing popularity of fast food. McDonald's is still viewed, as its advertisements claim, as a moderately fashionable family restaurant and Pizza Hut is seen as a haunt of the upper-middle class youth who have money to spare.

Warsi (2007)¹ begins quite authentically to speak of fast food in Indian context, that the term "fast food" means just that with a fluid boundary between fast foods and traditional dishes and with difficulty to provide a qualitative distinction, to which we would like to add across different contexts of one culture and different cultures. Like his succeeding part of writing points to the most popular foci concerning 'fast food': globalisation, corporate commerce² "The percentage share held by foodservice of total consumer, nutrition, economy, consumers and connected issues, like tourism, media, management, etc. (Kaur and Singh 2006; Pingali and Khwaja 2004; Goyal and Singh 2007; Ball, Horner and Nield 2007). Most of the aforesaid works can't help covering global and local scenes of *Mcdonalds*, *Nirulas*, *Pizza Hut*, *Dominos Pizza* or the like. Warsi's depiction of general scene may accord to many particular studies as well,

"Eating at home remains very much ingrained in Indian culture and changes in eating habits are very slow moving with barriers to eating out entrenched in certain sectors of Indian society. Traditionally, eating out was looked down upon in Indian society. The growth in nuclear families, particularly in urban India, exposure to global media and Western cuisine and an increasing number of women joining the workforce have had an impact on eating out trends. Increasingly, eating out is becoming synonymous with entertainment. And very often, it is preferred as a time-saving option to cooking. Not surprisingly, take aways are becoming increasingly popular."

¹SSRN-Food Retailing: Fast Food Industry by Khurshid Warsi, Syeedun May 1, 2007

²"The percentage share held by foodservice of total consumer expenditure on food has increased from a very low base to stand at 2.6% in 2001. ...Fast food is one of the worlds largest growing food type. India's fast food industry is growing by 40% a year and is expected to generate a billion dollars in sales by 2005. The multinational segment of Indian fast food industry is up to Rs. 6 bn," (Warsi, 2007)

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Nevertheless, the multiscopic screen of food and culture in current Indian context is gaining growing attention of audience in research, yet in need of microscopic highlights.

PRESENT EXPLORATION

The present attempt, based on an ethnographic research with participant observation for nearly a year in an urban centre at the periphery Kolkata metropolis, explores the narratives of non-corporate, grass-root usage of fast food in everyday life of local residents. The residents represent the middle-class majority of such urban setting, almost all of whom are aware of globally franchised windows of fast food, but yet to be regular customers. The selection of the locality and local insiders were purposive and based on availability and informants' consents.

The purposes were to cover the varied themes and contexts of consuming fast food, classification, if any, of the fast food among the Bengalis, who are known to represent one of the most colonially mediated mix of many local food patterns. More than two hundred consumers have been interviewed and observed during the fieldwork and in cases the fieldworker visited the homes of the consumers. For this paper, the articulation emerges from the following questions:

- a) The local categories of fast food
- b) The localisation, authenticity and value-addition to fast food by entrepreneurial service and consumers' choices
- c) The criteria of social relations, everyday life and culture of tastes of consumers bringing in the differential expansion and internalisation of fast food in the local population of different generations, gender and social roles.

The researchers selected some of the most popular fast food restaurants and food stalls, like Sen Snacks And Utsab, *chap* centers, and sweet shops, like M/s Moughar and M/s Srinarayan, all are placed in the residential area ranging from Pannajil 1 to Colony Mor. This study utilized direct observation to obtain general information about the movements of consumers in and out of the fast food restaurants, the food-stalls, the consumption patterns of eating fast food, and their general behaviors inside these restaurants. In addition, the researchers were able to obtain direct knowledge about the restaurants and their food when the researcher themselves participated as customers at many shops, both known and unknown. The observations were recorded in the form of field notes. Field notes are helpful in preserving the descriptive account of the activity and narration of the subjects, the situation of the interview taking place, and the setting of conversations. In this study, field notes on observations supplemented the information gathered from interviews and from conversations. Depth interviews, case studies, semi-structured interviews of both the consumers of different age-groups, identities, genders and sellers, including owners, managers and other employees took nearly nine months to comprehend the field of fast food in that urban centre. The articulation of fast food practices is done in this paper in terms of the insiders' view and principally using typical narrations relevant to the themes and emergent objectives stated above.

THE URBAN CENTRE BARASAT

Barasat is a large urban center located at a close proximity to Kolkata and serves as the headquarter of the district of North 24 Parganas in the district of West Bengal. Barasat is 22 km from Sealdah Station of Kolkata on the Sealdah–Bangaon branch line. It is at one end of the Barasat-Basirhat-Hasnabad branch line of Eastern Railway. It is a part of the area covered by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority. Barasat has the important railway and roadway junction within the area of Greater Kolkata. The whole residential area of Barasat Municipality is divided into 30 wards.

Barasat had a population of 231,515. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. (2001 census). The major population in the residential area of Barasat is Hindus (75.46%). Simultaneously, other religions like Muslim (24.17%), Christians (20%), Sikhs (0.10%), Buddhist (.05%), Jains (0.02%) are found in Barasat. The main language used is 'Bengali'. The major occupation of the residents is service. The proximity to Kolkata helps residents commute daily to Kolkata. Barasat has an average literacy rate of 77%, 54% male and 46% female. There are six big schools for boys and three three schools for girls. There are major two undergraduate colleges and one University. Several important roads like National Highway 34 (Krishnagar Road leading towards North Bengal), Jessore road (road leading to Jessore in Bangladesh via Bangaon); Taki road leading to Basirhat; Barrackpur Road links National Highway 35 with Kalayni Express way. Barrackpur connect Barasat with neighbouring sub-division and other districts.

Colony Mor, a Residential Area

Although Barasat is an old place, Colony Mor has been developed after the partition of India in 1947. The area became the habitat of the refugees coming from Bangladesh erstwhile East Pakistan. A number of colony like Srinarayan Colony, Gupta Colony, Vijay Lakxmi Colony developed a junction and this place came to be known as Colony Mor. This area is meeting point of NH-34 and Nabapalli Circular Road. Gradually more 'para' or 'palli' (local neighbourhoods) like Karunamoie, Bhadrabari, Salbagan, Pannajil 1,2,3,4,5 Arikbari, Chakaraboty Para were also developed. All these neighbourhoods are on the west of Colony Mor. On the east of Colony Mor is Pioneer Park, which is now famous for its Pandal during Kalipuja. Suburban residential area in Barasat consists of 30 Municipal wards out of which the places like Pannajil block no 1 to 5, Bhatrapally, Sarojini pally, Nabapally, Bhadra Bari, Chotobazar are all adjacent to the fast food centers and main road, National Highway 34. During last ten years, Barasat has witnessed rapid growth of its market economy and population. Large number of shops including fast food centers are established in this area along the both side of the national highway like grocer's shop, medicine shop, hardware stores, electronics shop, electrical shop, Jewelry shop, Cloth shop, Banks, ATM Counter, Petrol center etc making this area a busy place for business. Being Headquarter of North 24 Parganas and convenient place for linking Kolkata by road and Railways, people from neighboring areas have all thronged here making Barasat one of the most congested urban centers around Kolkata metropolis.

FAST FOOD IN THE URBAN CENTRE

There has been rise in Govt. offices, in number of shops especially of Jewellery, Cloth and other variety. As Colony Mor is surrounded by residential area, the shops normally open at 7 o'clock in the morning, but the fast food centers open at afternoon 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. Shops at this area remain busy till 10 p.m. Associated with this growth have been people's changing lifestyle and eating habits. One result of this has been a boom in the fast food industry. In earlier days consumers mainly liked traditional foods *dalpuri*, *kachuri*, *singara*, *nimki*, desserts. Karunadhara, situated at Colony Mor, on N.H.-34, was the most popular sweet corner serving both items in Barasat. Fast food restaurant were very few in number. Because they could not compete with the popularity of traditional food and probably people did not attach any authenticity to the taste of spicy fast foods. But there has been a radical change by a decade. Fast food restaurant entrepreneurs have started to provide better qualities of food with hospitality, have decorated their restaurants attractively. With passing of days tastes of the customers also have changed. They are more interested in new tastes of varieties types of fast food than traditional taste. Karunadhara now is closed. No sweet corner solely depends on the sale of sweets. They always do some special arrangements like; old restaurant *Moughar* serves *dahi vada*, *paprichat*, *lassi*. *Lakhi narayan* serves *kachuri* in morning and *parota* in the evening in residential area of Barasat.

Availability of Fast Food: Four Species and Four Structures

Among the Bengalis there is a long-standing distinction regarding cooked/prepared food between home-made food (*gharer khabaar*) and food from outside (*bairer khabaar*). The orthodoxy lies in always privileging the former over the later, except sweets. The history of this apparently simple (but with multi-layered and complex implications) distinction and differential acceptance of prepared/cooked food from outside needs a separate attention. Nevertheless, fast food as a *bairer khabar* is never traditionally valued as good over the homemade food, especially with respect to the concept of food related to health. Across economic status positions it still operates among the Bengalis. The gradual exposures to urbanisation and present globalisation have made the access of fast food or food from outside more to the younger generations. Not only acceptance of outdoor foods, in Barasat the research found the categories of fast food in semi-classificatory forms.

Many local, non-local Indian and non-Indian fast foods are available in Barasat in locally famous food restaurants and stalls. The insider view of the consumers confirm the prevalence of four species of the food are found here-Bengali traditional fast foods (a) *chap*, *singara*, *porota*, *kachuri*, *luchi*, *cutlet*, *fish fry*, (b) Chinese foods (chowmin), (c) North-western foods (c) *Papri chat*, *dahi vada*, etc, and (d) monginis, Sugar and Spices (local imitation of westernized foods). Similarly the Bengali consumers of the residential area have a consensus on four structures of fast food.

- I. Type I is known as restaurant like Paroma restaurant, Sen Snack's restaurant. These shops offer varied types of *Chowmin*, *roll*, etc. only in the evening.
- II. Type II is known is known as hotel, e.g. Utsab, Adarsha Bharotiya Hotel and

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Restaurant, Karunadhara Hotel and Restaurant. These types of shops sell rice and *Biriyani* and allied side dishes at afternoon. After 5 p.m. they start to sell various types of roll, Chowmin, fries, culets and hand made *rutis*.

- III. Type III is associated with sellers of tongue twister small food (*mukhorochok*) of *chap* and sweet items in the evening.
- IV. Fourth type is a confectionary shop-cum-fast food center. These types of shops mainly deal with sweets and milk products, but for more profit in business, they sell *kachuri*, *luchi*, *singara*, *dahi vada*, *papdi chat* in one part of the shop. A few shops also sell *porota* in the evening. These types of shops are labeled with “mistanna bhandar” eg, Karunadhara Mistanna Bhandar, Sri Narayan Mistanya Bhandar, Padma Sweets etc.

All fast food centres are placed along the both sides of main road. Fast Food industry is booming in residential areas of Barasat by offering following criteria according to the insiders:

- a. Affordable price for the customers ranging from lower class to upper middle class. (according to opinions of fast food businessmen)
- b. Local tastes
- c. Good tastes
- d. Varied tastes
- e. Large quantity
- f. Enduring differences of middle class social composition of the sellers and consumers
- g. Friendly ambience making even the unknown people address each other by the Bengali kin terms ‘dada’ (elder brother), ‘didi’ (elder sister), ‘boudi’, ‘bone’ (younger sister), Bhai (younger brother)’ etc.
- h. Little distance between housing area and shopping area

Localisation, Authenticity and Competing Value-Addition: Entrepreneurs and Consumers

In 1990 there was only one fast food restaurant, Sen snacks in the Barasat. Thereafter three restaurants were set up in the next ten to twelve years. The interesting point is that all the owners of the new shops are the erstwhile employees, cooks of the Sen snacks or other fast food centres. Emergence of new stall with their more innovative ideas gives a tough competition to the older ones. In order to protect identity in face of the emergence of more new shops, all owners of the restaurant have the single and only cook in the restaurant. They take other employees as accountant, washer man, waiter but never as cook.

Cultural acceptance by the Bengali people of various kinds of fast food originated from different Indian and non-Indian cultures may be viewed as the result of cultural interplay between regional, national and global authenticity of the foods, their localization and value-addition. But the observed fact is that when people choose these fast foods, they no longer feel that they are consuming food belonging to cultures of different regions and nations. The ‘fast food’ is inherently accepted as multiracial, multi-regional, multicultural, not with much distance from their local identity. The importation of the previously unknown food from other regions is viewed as the cultural internalisation of the fast food as a whole.

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This localisation is the major factor in fast food boom everywhere. In other words localisation of the food can be described as the adaptation of the food according to the (food) culture and structure of the society, where it is going to be consumed by its particular social members. Food entrepreneurs as food geneticist select ingredients/genes autonomously to replace the authentic taste by knowing the local taste preferences to create a new species and according to the demand of their flourishing business. It means a mutant food species, newly emerged food with local ingredients or self-innovative ingredients of the entrepreneurs. Such species or specimens of food become dominant to replace the original ones. Each culture zone produces varieties of taste of one generic food. Food culture has also the cognitive value. Cognitive value of a food of a particular culture is accepted by the members of another culture with its own subjective contexts of values and norms. The subjectivity gives identity to the taste or knowledge in the same and different culture. Entrepreneurs produce foods with their sense of subjective taste and create food/s, which are identified by the name of restaurants/entrepreneurs. Each Restaurant makes their identity through their innovative foods while the generic food may be found in other restaurant with different identity. It is a competition among restaurants to lure customers by producing localised food with their identities. For example, the restaurant, *Sen snacks* boils the solid Noodles together with the vegetables like, carrot, cauliflower, pumpkins, green papaya with oil, lest the ingredients are not melted with each other. Boiling process continues for fifty minutes. They scatter the boiled ingredients over the nets, and dry up by electrical fan. They store Noodles in big bowls. After getting order for vegetable *Chowmin*, the cook fries boiled noodles in *dalda* oil and adds azina mooto, sugar, salt, soya sauce, chilly sauce, tomato sauce, special *masala* /spices (*jira, dhone, char mogoj, chgat masala* and a special mixed spice), and juice of meat curry. Within five minutes 'vegetable' Chowmin is prepared. They garnish it with tomato sauce, chilly sauce, lemon juice, onion, and cucumber. It contains the locally desirable tastes of tongue in a range from light sweetness to medium chilly flavour to complex flavour of sour originated by mix of the lemon juice, tomato sauce, and chilly sauce.

But in the *Utsab Restaurant*, *Noodles* (mixing with oil) and vegetables are boiled separately. Boiled noodles and vegetables are dried up in baskets, made up of sticks of bamboo. Fans are not used in drying up. Cook fries the boiled noodles and Agina motto, special spice, home made (they did not tell secret of spices to the fieldworker). After getting order, he fries the pre-fried noodles with boiled vegetables in *dalda* oil. The same process is used in case of chicken chowmin, mutton chowmin, egg chowmin, mixed chowmin, despite *non-veg* items. They garnish chowmin only salads, made up of onion, cucumber, carrot mixed with lemon juice and raw chilly. They add sauce in chowmin if customer requires.

Chaps (fried mixture of food stuffs with a quoted layer of food grains) represent another type of local popular fast food in Barasat. They have the strategy of localisation and competition of identity making. An example is given now: The most popular chap shop, *Rochona Mukhorochok* at Helabot tala and *Colonymor-er chaper dokan* in Barasat, follow the traditional ways for preparing their food stuffs. The procedures of preparing chaps are

not hugely different from each other. Both shops compete with each other to increase their sale by introducing new types of chaps. For example, the main attraction of *Rochona Mukhorochok* is their capsicum chap, Cauliflower chap, Bean's chap with their special *chatney* (local type of sauce) made up of pudina, coriander, tomato, ginger and other spices. Probably, most of the people buy chap from their shops only for chatney. They make only vegetable items keeping in mind that many people are averse to non-vegetarian items on certain days of the week. They also sell *gaja*, *amiti*, *malpoa*. The "Colony Morer Chaper Dokan" attracts their customers by offering both varieties of vegetarian and non-vegetarian items. The most popular and non-vegetarian items are *Mangsher Chap* (meat chap), *Chingrer Macher Chap* (prawn Chap)', *Moglai Chap* etc. They don't offer any sauce because they think that the sauce reduces their original taste of chap. Both the shops run their business well by attracting customers by means of their innovative items of fast food with the more improved varieties of old items.

The whole process indicates how they are different to each other with respect to the restaurant's identity of recipes. The recipes of the each restaurant give rise to authenticity and restaurant's identity in local tastes of chowmin while the taste is completely different from the original taste of chowmin in terms of the Chinese taste.

Consumers' Criteria of choosing Food Centers: Space, Types of Food and Service

Consumers choose Fast Food Centres according to not only their tastes of food, but many other criteria at times. Competition has motivated the consumers on certain initiatives of fast food entrepreneurs, in their introduction of new desirable items, responses to eating out system, cleanness, behaviour of hospitality, etc. But how the choices of the customers/consumers operate may be exemplified from their own issues of narration. Interpretations of the individual consumers are self-explanatory about their situational problems, preferences of food and negotiated choices of sellers:

A lady consumer explains,

"Generally I like to go Sen's Snacks, having a large clean area where I can comfortably wait till my order is taken for serving."

Similarly another younger lady narrates,

"Never I go to Utsab because there is no definite place for their customers where one can wait for after ordering the food. The area in front of the shop becomes crowded after 7 p.m. with customers of "rumali roti". The crowd is also not up to the standard".

Choice of another young lady explains her choice about restaurant,

"I have to go Utsab restaurant frequently because in the whole Colony Mor area it sells fish fry, cutlets etc".

An elderly lady with her traditional values of household connects her choice of restaurant,

"Never I buy food from Karunadhara, because they sell rice besides the chowmin; their food is *Sackri* (polluted). I can not bring *sackri* with other stationary products which I use in kitchen or in temple."

Another home making lady emphasizes her preference of food and connected fast food center,

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"In stead of Sen's snacks I prefer to go Karunadhara Restaurant and Hotel and Utsab, Adarsha Bharotiya Hotel have eating out facility, which I prefer.

A housewife gave reason for her choice of restaurant,

"I like to go Utsab Restaurant where I can collect both the ruti and chowmin from the same place".

Another homemaker woman adds her concept of healthy fast food to her choice of restaurant,

"Moughar gives us opportunity to taste a different kind of food which is more nutritionally enriched than fried fast foods; here is no risk in gaining calorie by consuming *dahi vada*, *papdi chat* and similar foods"

Similar awareness of pollution in food is reflected from the choice of Restaurant of a man in his early 30s,

"I avoid Utsab and Karunadhara restaurant. They prepare food in front of the main road in open atmosphere., By using microscope, possibly it is visible that food is layered with the dust. But Sen's snacks prepares their food inside room."

A boy studying in standard eight could explain her choice of restaurant according to his taste,

"I like to come to *Colony Mor-er chaper dokan*, although Rochona Mukhorochok is adjacent to my house, because their non-vegetable chaps, specially moglai chap are not available in other shops."

A male teacher of physical science in Barasat Govt School says,

"I like to buy chaps from Helabot Talar Chaper Dokan, because it provides varieties of non vegetarian items with the vegetarian items. Its quality of food is trust-worthy."

CONSUMERS' CRITERIA OF CHOOSING FAST FOOD: SOCIAL RELATIONS, EVERYDAY LIFE AND CULTURE OF TASTES

The criteria of growing attachment to fast food in the urban households of a residential area in contact with a Kolkata metropolis are diverse, overlapping, situational and inter-related to the life in an Indian city. The interpretations are self-explanatory and indicate a shared cultural space from where they emerge. The pieces of narration in the words of the respondents are selected to exemplify the types of variation in and across the themes illustrated below.

(a) Preferences of Fast Food among the aged Bengalis

"I like to eat chaps, a light food rather chowmin, moglai etc. After consuming one or two chaps in evening ,I can easily eat rice at night but the consumption of heavy food, like moglai doesn't give the opportunity to do dinner and causes acidity".

"Chap is delicious and safe to eat in order to spend less and to protect myself from outdoor 'wrong' non-vegetarian food stuff."

"At this age I cannot digest spicy items but wish to eat some light fries, *bhajabhuji*. Occasionally I come to Rochona Mukhorochok to buy chaps because they keep fried vegetarian items. ...You know, non-vegetarian items are ruled out from diet of a widow. So Rochona mukhorochok is trust worthy."

"Whenever I come to market I buy kachuri from Srinarayan shop. It is my favorite food among different outdoor foods. Kacuri, singara and the likes are reminiscent of our childhood memory. And my weaker purchasing capacity doesn't permit buying chowmin, moglai and all those are luxury food stuff."

"Two pieces of kachuri are enough for my dinner. At times, I live alone and when food are in low quantity for dinner, for avoiding the duty of cooking at the end of the day, I bring two to three kachuries for me."

"I buy kachuri and jilipi for my family members, especially for my elderly father, on every Sunday. Heavier and other contemporary fast food are disliked by my elder family members"

(b) Differential Affinity and value for Fast Food in the Families

Food prepared or cooked outside home is not acceptable still in many Bengali families, as it has been alluded above. The growing popularity and acceptance are more among the younger members, especially the kids. The modes of dealing with the differences, especially among the adults and the strategies of persuasion or consumption may be exemplified by the consumers' narrations.

"My son loves to eat fast foods. He is fond of eating fast food everyday although he knows full well that fast foods are not good for health. I have to come to buy such foods for him, because I can not refuse his insistence for fast food time and again."

"My son always asks us to bring outdoor foods at home, especially when any good results of academic performance come out. If we refuse, he becomes very annoyed and hurt. So frequently I need to come to the restaurants for fast foods."

"I have come to Sen's snack to celebrate my sister's birthday with her favourite food items, although variety of Bengali foods have been cooked by mother at home on this occasion according to the rituals of occasions of Bengali food culture, but from my sister's point of view no celebration is complete without the exotic taste of fast food."

"I need to bring fast food only for my daughter and wife, although my elder family members are against the consumption of expensive outdoor food. My economic condition is not well. But money is not all in human life. The happiness, what I have seen in their faces after seeing such food packs in my hand, energizes me a lot."

"While I am fond of fast food, the elder members of our family are fond of home-made food. I have good opportunity to have fast food outside. Therefore, I don't make it an issue at home, because this might cause a quarrel among the family members which is not desirable".

"My mother likes to cook pizza, pastry, cake at home keeping in mind our health and taste. For that purpose microwave is required. Why should I buy a microwave when I can eat pizza, cake, burger and pastry readily and at cheaper costs available in so many fast food centres? I know my mother at his age would not be habituated with the microwave style of cooking instead of oven. It would be deserted in selves within a few months. And if we cook all those foods at home taking long time, what will be the significance of the name 'fast food'? These types of food are differentiated from other kinds food because of their delicious taste produced by special know-how to make them quickly available and acceptable to the consumers. But my mother starts stating how much she enjoys the satisfaction of seeing her children grown up healthily by eating her cooked food, which symbolises of proper nurturance and love. She uses food as emotional power against us, ha ha !"

"The disobedience in taking fast food against food taboo on restricted days of a week creates a little bit of fight with grandmother"

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"I have come here with all my friends of science coaching centre along with our teacher to celebrate good scoring in science subjects. *Sir* has offered us to do a celebration in his home with homemade delicacies. We did not agree regarding homemade food.. It is a good opportunity to taste fast food instead of monotonous home food. It also gave us to dress well for a party in a restaurant beyond every day routine of food and uniform".

(c) Advantage of small family

"Generally we have got used to fast food four or five times together in a week. As I live in a two-member family, it is not difficult to spend that money only for fast food. If I had a burden of many family members or to live in the joint family, I could not spend the money the manner I do now. Nuclear family gives me opportunity to spare money as I wish."

"As because of living in a nuclear family, supplemented by my widowed mother, we can handle the food rules with autonomy and flexibility. There are no such restrictions as to taking food at home only. For example, when we feel tired or find it difficult to prepare food at home we have lunch or dinner in hotel. The disadvantage is also true. We had to depend on food of home delivery throughout one month, while my mother was severely ill and my wife decided to spend the whole day beside my mother for taking minute care and nursing support to my ill mother. Had we lived a joint family there would have been many hands to prepare and serve homemade foods."

"Sometime dinner items are short in quantity for three members. My mother asks to bring a packet of chowmin to compensate the little quantity of food instead of cooking another dish. Probably it would not have been possible in any bigger joint family,"

(d) Relieving the member of family in charge of regular cooking at home

"By depending on the fast food at least once or twice a day among lunch, tiffin in my University, food in the evening and dinner at home, I want to give relief to my ill mother from tight and time-bound cooking."

"Generally I want to bring some outdoor foods at home for my evening meal for giving relief to my mother from the hazards of cooking after her return from office duties."

"My mother prepares rice dishes in breakfast in the early morning. It is quite difficult for her at this age of life to prepare dishes for lunch again before I leave home for the office. Instead of taking homemade food prepared by my mother for lunch, during office hour I am used to fast food in my lunch for giving relief to my mother."

"We are newly married. My wife is not yet very comfortable with cooking everyday. I have a quite hectic schedule of the office and my wife Paromita feels very lonely whole daytime. In the evening, we enjoy our time together with varied dishes of fast food."

(e) The Means for Recreation in the Families

"I like to serve fast foods from outside in the evening to my family members on the weekends when all members are in mood to enjoy the free time and company of each other before starting again time bounded schedule of an another new week. Exotic taste of fast food adds few feathers in the joy of family reunion. It seems weekends are incomplete without outdoor foods."

"Sunday is the day of enjoying eating together to my mother and me with the fast foods such as chowmin, moglai, chap-muri etc."

(f) Adjustment to daily outdoor schedule of life.

"I leave home for college at 8:30 a.m. and return around 7 p.m. after taking tuitions; a long hour-almost more than half of a day I need to spend outside everyday. Thus I need to depend on fast food to satisfy hunger and to entertain my taste buds."

"By the rule of morning college I leave home within 6 a.m. to attend the first class, at 7:30 a.m, followed by other three classes till the 11:30 a.m. with my empty stomach. After a long time of fast, I go with my friends to the adjacent fast food centres to fill our empty stomach."

"It is strictly prohibited in our family to include outdoor *veg/nonveg* food items in some particular days such as Tuesday, Friday, Saturday due to some religious taboo. But when I work outside and pursue a busy schedule I cannot follow such restrictions leading to difference between my mother and me."

"I am used to taking fast food twice or thrice in a week, especially on those days when my programme schedule is compact with heavy workloads. On three days, of a week, I need to leave home at 6:30 a.m. for class starts on 9:30 a.m. After completing college I go to Rice institution and return home around 10 p.m. So it is not quite possible for me to carry the meals of the whole day in a box. Hence for adding fuel to body I need to depend on the outdoor fast food. On the rest of the days in a week, except Tuesday and Saturday spent with religious obligation even to food, fast food satisfies my stomach in different ways like friend's requests, dining out with family members, attending guests at home with delicious fast food, etc.. Sometime consciously I bring fast food for family members, especially for my mother, keeping in mind her joy and relief from at least arranging *sadhya belar tiffin (Tiffin for the evening)*, though the relief would be matter of few hours "

(g) Achievement and/or Pressure of Status

"Instead of serving home-made traditional food items (luchi, porota, etc) to the guests, it looks better to serve the plate with the coveted fast food items to the guests. It is not only to offer many a bowls of costly low caloric food to the guests, but the food items should be categorised into three stage food etiquette-Starter, main course, desert. It is also an art and status of giving and consuming that is difficult to maintain by homemade food properly. So for most of the occasions I opt for suitable fast food according to the nature of the guests."

"It is simply disgusting to eat alone the home made launch box, while other friends are having their tiffin in canteen with lots of tasty, crispy fast food. If it continues for a long time it surely develops some kind of inferiority in friend circle, as I feel in my case. With this habit of consuming homemade food I was afraid gradually to be outcast from my friend circle. To maintain my status equivalent my friend circle, I go to canteen and eat fast foods."

"After being habituated with attending famous restaurants I cannot adjust with any low level ambience of taking food outdoor. Besides, women should be choosy about the food place to avoid unpleasant various types problems. So I am used to buy and consume foods from some definite 'decent' restaurants'.

"Sometime I feel shaky among friends because I can not spend much money on food like them. I need to go according to the economic condition of my family. Father's pension is the only source of income for the family. So, there is no scope for any luxury. For avoiding the occasions of taking food with my friends, I take the excuse of diet control. It is not always possible to maintain this cover-up I feel ashamed of the exposure of my poverty in public. However, I am also blessed with my understanding friends. They give me a lot of support".

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"My affordable expenditure per day for food is around 30 rupees to 35 rupees. So monthly it is around 1000 rupees while my friends on an average may spend 400 rupees to 500 rupees in a month. I rank high in the invisible hierarchy of economy among my peer groups."

"I feel that everybody feels jealous because of my sophistication, richness and pampering. It gives me pleasure of my higher social status. For maintaining the same sense of position and happiness frequently I offer treat to my two roommates."

"As a father, it's my responsibility to fulfill all wishes of my child. But my financial condition does not allow me to do any luxury: Even buying one packet of chowmin is very difficult for me. Whenever I come to doctor's chamber at Colonymor, my son craves for a packet of chowmin of Sen's Snacks as his friends frequently consume this kind of food. But I return home empty handed. I have no answer to his insistence and queries. Possibly I am losing the position of a good father."

"Our class is divided into group on the basis of maintaining trendy figures and dresses. These girls always talk about spa, designer dresses, cosmetics, trendy food, make-up kit. Probably only for appearing good looking to seek good salaried boy friend. All day long they spend in Mcd, Pizza Hut or canteen. Academic studies are secondary to them. Only for fake romance I am not going to do this against my family culture. I come to college to study, not to rank in hierarchy of feminine attractiveness. Today I express this easily but to build this opinion I had to fight with myself days after. Perhaps for this reason I am little distant from the fast food culture"

"For some years, I am becoming fatty despite the little amount of intake of fast food or food as a whole. I look older than my age. My mother sympathize me saying that I have genetically inherited large body from paternal side. It is not due to the food. My cousins are also fatty. But nobody advises them; everyone comes to me to advise about food and how to be careful about restricting fat. According to the relatives my father's fat symbolises healthy figure, power, brightness, etc. etc. for getting inherent figure along the line of his ancestors, while my fat symbolises obese girl whose demand will be less for marriage".

CONCLUSION

The principal limitation emerging from the nature of fieldwork work is the non-availability of non-consumers of local fast food. It could not study those, who do not like fast food or those who do not consume fast food from the food centers of Barasat. On the basis of the data collected from participatory consumers and entrepreneurs, social relations, especially family, peers and guests, have been in the urban residential center of food practices in almost all cases. Even the sellers of fast food try to add value to their production and service based on the local norms of food culture and friendly behaviour of hospitality. Compared to professional life, life centred on personal social relations and economic conditions has more impact on perceptions and practices of choosing and consuming fast food. Identity of individual consumers of fast food in the residential urban center of Barasat may be conceived more as a part of the local culture including its values, norms, responses to authenticity, affordability and internalization in the sense of collective life. It is the differentially changing local culture to which the consumers belong and which make intertwining of criteria of choice and action around growing entrepreneurial scene of fast food in Barasat. The elderly generation has differential response to the acceptance of fast food or to be selective about them; whereas except a few cases of negative consequences of food for 'body', if not health or selective

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attitude towards fast food younger generation may afford conflict and dispute with their preceding generation, who believe more strongly in the binary of good/bad in homemade/ outdoor (fast food inclusive) food.

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Address for correspondence: Arnab Das, Selection Grade Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35, Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata -700 019, Email: arnab_katha@yahoo.co.in

BODY MASS INDEX AND EXCESS ADIPOSITY

Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay¹ and Jyoti Ratan Ghosh²

Abstract: Anthropometry as an indicator of nutritional and health status of adults is now well established. Adult nutritional status can be evaluated in many ways; however, BMI provides the most useful population-level measure of obesity as it is the same for both sexes and for all ages of adults. But conventional BMI cut-off value and proposed BMI cut-off value could not identified entire population, respectively, who had truly PBF more than 25 percentage. The present study attempts to understand the efficacy of body mass index to appraise obesity, based on different BMI cut-off values and Youden's index.

INTRODUCTION

The use of anthropometry as an indicator of nutritional and health status of adults is now well established. Body mass index (BMI) is a simple index of weight-for-height that is commonly used in classifying obesity in adult populations and individuals. It is defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in meters (kg/m^2). Although adult nutritional status can be evaluated in many ways, BMI provides the most useful population-level measure of obesity as it is the same for both sexes and for all ages of adults (WHO, 2006). Moreover, it is inexpensive, noninvasive, and suitable for large-scale survey (WHO, 1995; Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay 2009). BMI is generally considered a good indicator of not only the nutritional status but also the socioeconomic condition of a population, especially adult populations in developing countries (Ghosh *et al.*, 2009). However, since 1995, there have been several studies, which have attempted to identify an appropriate BMI cut-off value for assessing obesity in adults. The objective of the present study was to understand the efficacy of body mass index to appraise obesity, based on different BMI cut-off values.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample of the present cross-sectional study comprised 430 adult Bengalee men from West Bengal, India. Individuals were informed by letters and oral communication regarding the aims and objectives of the present study.

Interested individuals were incorporated and those who were under medication were excluded from the present study. Information on ethnicity, age, occupation and educational status were obtained from all subjects with the help of a questionnaire.

Anthropometric measurements were made by trained investigators using the standard techniques (Lohman *et al.*, 1988). Height and weight were measured to the nearest 0.1 cm and 0.5 kg respectively. Body mass index (BMI) was computed using the following standard

¹Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata 700019, West Bengal, India

²Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, PSV, Visva-Bharati University, Sriniketan-731236, Birbhum, West Bengal, India

Body Mass Index and Excess Adiposity

equation: $\text{BMI (kg/m}^2\text{)} = \text{Weight (kg)} / \text{height (m}^2\text{)}$. Percent body fat (PBF) was measured using bioelectrical impedance (OMRON HBF-302).

Obesity was assessed by the followings, internationally accepted World Health Organization (WHO) BMI cut-off value (WHO, 1995), WHO's proposed BMI cut-off value (WHO, 2000) for Asians, total body fat greater than twenty-five percent (Hortobagyi *et al.*, 1994) and by using the cut-off value proposed for adult Bengalee males (Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay, 2007). The following cut-off values were used for obesity: $\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ (WHO, 1995), $\text{BMI} \geq 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$ (WHO, 2000), $\text{PBF} > 25\%$ (Hortobagyi *et al.*, 1994) and $\text{BMI} \geq 24 \text{ kg/m}^2$ (Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean age of the men was 36.48 ± 12.23 year. The mean and SD of height, weight, PBF and BMI were $165.14 \text{ cm} \pm 6.47 \text{ cm}$, $62.29 \text{ kg} \pm 12.59 \text{ kg}$, $22.00 \% \pm 6.67 \%$, and $22.76 \text{ kg/m}^2 \pm 4.01 \text{ kg/m}^2$ (table 1). The results of the present study revealed that, when PBF ($\geq 25\%$) was used as a gold standard measure of obesity, 35.58% males were truly obese. However, the results differ when $\geq 30.0 \text{ kg/m}^2$ and $\geq 25.0 \text{ kg/m}^2$ cut-off point of BMI was applied for the assessment of obesity, seven 3.9% and sixty-two 34.4% males were found to be obese. The false negative rate indicated that the conventional BMI cut-off value of $\geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ and proposed BMI cut-off value of $\geq 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$ could not identified 98.5% and 37.3% individuals, respectively, who had truly $\text{PBF} \geq 25\%$ percentage. However, false negative rate reduced to 16.3%, when optimal cut-off value of $\geq 24 \text{ kg/m}^2$ was used. The Youden's index revealed that the conventional BMI cut-off value had about 10% likelihood of detecting obesity in individuals with truly excess adiposity, compared to individuals with normal level of adiposity. However, the likelihood was about 50% when proposed BMI cut-off values were used. Moreover, the optimal cut-off value revealed the likelihood of about 75% for diagnosing obesity. Therefore, measuring body fat instead of BMI could be an appropriate way to categorize individuals with excess adiposity. However, this preliminary finding warranted further studies in other Asian ethnic groups to understand whether the same relationships exist. Since, it is the amount of excess body fat, rather than the amount of excess weight that determines the health risks of obesity.

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Table 1. Characteristics of the studied population

Variables	Mean	SD
Height (cm)	165.14	6.47
Weight (kg)	62.29	12.59
Body mass index (kg/m ²)	22.76	4.01
Percent of body fat (PBF)	22.00	6.67
Fat mass (kg)	14.32	6.62

Table 2. Comparison of BMI cut-off values to evaluate obesity

Cut-off values	PPV	NPV	FPR	FNR	YI
†BMI ≥ 30kg/m ²	94.20%	66.60%	89.50%	0.40%	0.10
‡BMI ≥ 25kg/m ²	84.30%	81.70%	37.30%	6.50%	0.56
#BMI ≥ 24kg/m ²	83.10%	90.90%	16.30%	9.40%	0.74

†, WHO international cut-off point

‡, WHO cut-off point proposed in 2000

#, Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay, 2007

PPV=Positive predictive value; NPV=Negative predictive value; FPR=False positive rate; FNR=False negative rate; YI=Youden's index.

Address for correspondence: Dr. Jyoti Ratan Ghosh, Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, PSV, Visva Bharati, E-mail: jrghosh@rediffmail.com

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY ON MEDICAL PRACTICES IN AN URBAN INDIAN SETTING

Abhradip Banerjee^a Suchandra Ghosh^b, Arnab Das^c and Dipankar Chatterjee^d

Abstract: The present work is an attempt to provide an ethnographic picture of health care practices in North Kolkata region in relation to the changing nature of health-care practices all around the world. It tries to understand the heterogeneous nature of health care practices, which often is contested and composed of multiple voices, fragments, and complexes of interests involving several participatory members. The study was conducted during first part of 2009 up to middle part of 2009 among several participatory agents involving doctors, stockist, pharmacies, patients and the sales representatives of four prominent pharmaceutical companies operating in the region. The scene emerges to show how the pharmaceutical companies through sales promotion and unethical means and indirect effects of their actions may lower the patient benefit from the local health-care practices.

Keywords: Pharmaceutical Anthropology, Sales and Promotion, Health-Care Practices, Kolkata.

INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical industry forms a critical part of today's health care industry in India. "There are nearly as many as 17,000 pharmaceutical companies in India who produce over 40,000 branded formulations, many times more than the rest of the world" (Gulhati 2004:778). The Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA), in their *39th Annual Publication* 2001 considers pharmaceutical industry as one of the major economic sectors in terms of the total Indian economy. The estimated value of production of bulk drugs and formulations in India during 2000–2001 was approximately Rs 22,187 crores (~\$4.5 billion) out of which Rs. 4344 crores is for bulk drugs and Rs. 17,843 crores for the formulations. But the situation especially during the pre-independence and period prior to that had strong dependence on the several other modes of available traditional Medicare system like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and others (Bode 2007). The popularity of the "western medical practices grew along with globalization and a collaborative effort by the multinational pharmaceutical companies to sustain their corporate interest" (Ecks and Basu 2009:87) compromising on people's interest.

1970s was a prime example when several multinationals have actually invaded into the market of several developing countries (van der Geest 2006). Perhaps this has something to do the rapid growth of pharmaceutical industry (Joshi 2003: 76; Gulhati 2004: 778) both in India and all over the world. Most of the local companies during the 1960s and 1970s only used to import the generic version of drugs and had a status of sole repacking of those products.

^aSenior Research Fellow (UGC-NET), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^bResearch Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^cSelection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^dLecturer, Faculty of Integrated Rural and Tribal Development and Management, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University



Indian health care industry, which “gradually became pharmaceuticalized” (Kamat 1998:779), led to a growing production high cost, non-essential drugs and targeted towards a particular section of mass. The tough competition amongst several of the competitor brands and products had been probably pushing the pharmaceuticals and its employees to be keener on the aspect of marketing of medicine (Gulhati 2004:778).

Like in any other sector in sales and marketing, pharmaceutical companies are also spending a huge amount on training and marketing. In a nation like U.S.A an estimated amount of close to \$8000 to \$13000 is spent per year on each physician (Drake and Uhlman 1993; T. Randall 1991). But why pharmaceuticals spend such a huge amount on the doctors? Studies those cover the issues of physician-pharmaceutical industry relationship (Campbell et.al. 2007) shows that there are both the possibilities of reward (Coyle 2002; Blumenthal, 2004; Holmer 2001) along with the threats (Brennan et al. 2006; Brodkey 2005) innate to such collaborations. The intensity of such issues may be related to the potential consequences whether the ‘gifts’ can actually influence prescription of medication that results in increasing cost or negative health outcomes (Wazana 2000:373). Vander-veer’s (2003) explanation¹ provides a good basis for understanding how the pharmaceutical companies and their agencies segment physicians according to their desire to product science. The way pharmaceutical industry often sell the concept of disease before they can actually market its medicine reflects on the issue how these companies are using ‘concept of science’ to capitalize on the basic human need of medication (Healy 1996). Pharmaceuticals often spend huge amount through commercial detailing, drug samples, and journal advertisements (Rosenthal *et al.* 2002). Even they may alter their drug inserts in developing countries to sell more of their products (Silverman 1976). In a country like India pharmaceuticals are fast approaching a state of being an essential commodity in health care practices (Kamat 1995) in spite of it’s quite a late emergence and strong unfamiliarity with Indian philosophies (Bode 2007). The non-recognition on part of the doctors (Gibson *et al.* 1998) about the possibilities of being influenced by pharmaceutical marketing (Sierles *et al.* 2005) contributes to the possibilities of anthropological understanding how the two competing worldviews of a doctor and a “drug rep”² is articulated during a pharmaceutical promotion: (i) How do the doctors think and proceed in course of providing therapeutic solution? And, (ii) how the innumerable dimension of human interest of several intermediaries come under one umbrella or “nexus” (van der Geest 2006) to affect health care practices.

¹See Vander-veer (2003) where mentined about the three categories of doctors by which pharmaceutical companoes sort their customers (doctors) in terms of their desire to product science i) “Scientists”; those who are associated with infectious disease and have the confidence to try out newer molecules, ii) “Modernist”; usually associated with primary health care and often prescribe in line with their colleagues, and iii) “traditionalists”; tend to lest familiar with underlying science of a product and prescribe they way they always have done unless some thing drastic happens.

²A popular co-notation used synonymous to Medical Representatives.

THE PRESENT WORK

Thus the present work attempts to provide an ethnographic view of health care practices in North Kolkata region. The study was conducted nearly for six months from first part of 2009 up to middle part of 2009 among several participatory members of pharmaceutical nexus like Medical representatives, their 'customers' mostly in doctors and other stakeholders like stockists, pharmacy owners, etc. In the present article, an effort has been made to understand the heterogeneous nature of health care practices, which often is contested and composed of multiple voices, fragments, and complexes of interests (Appabulam 2009; van der Geest 2006). This article will focus on four principal agencies of related health practices :

- i) Pharmaceutical company pursuing its customer,
- ii) Doctors' attitudes towards patients and pharmaceuticals,
- iii) Inextricable business link of distributors and lastly the,
- iv) Patients' well-being in relation to the pharmaceutical practices.

Because the network of the agencies is formed through the conflicting series of interests that often moulds or shapes the decision of the end users of the medicinal objects, which surely become the cultural ones.

Data have been collected initially with a pilot survey basically involving interviews of the MRs, doctors and the retailers of medicine of the region of the northern part of larger Kolkata metropolis (the "culturally" recognized northern metropolis, beyond the political jurisdiction of Kolkata metropolitan authority proper) for over a week. From those preliminary understanding four pharmaceutical companies were selected namely³, (a) Xcare Pvt. Ltd. (b) P-link, (c) Medpic and (d) Wbrand Pvt. Ltd. as these are known to be the most active pharmaceutical companies in the region of north Kolkata and around. In order to know about the organisational networks and functions of pharmaceutical companies and the impacts of their promotion of sales on the doctors and patients the purposive selection of the informants was done. The sampling also engaged the snowball technique of exploring, locating and finally selecting the medical representatives, the stockists and the doctors. Doctors from the same region were selected on the basis of their profiles, patient pools and the MRs' (medical representative) classification. Apart from these, using the similar purposive selection of the patients was done from the clinical setting keeping in mind the "availability" criteria. In order to probe deeper into the underlying logic of practices around pharmaceuticals stockists, sub-stockists and retailers from the same region were selected and interviewed.

THE PHARMACEUTICAL PRACTICES

There are several pharmaceutical companies who are operating in region of North Kolkata. Even the number and local 'grades' of doctors, types of patients and their reported illnesses vary in wide range. Naturally the patterns of medication and the associated bodies of therapeutic knowledge also vary accordingly. There are both domestic and multinational pharmaceutical companies those are struggling to get their fair shares in the trade. The presence of modern

³The names of the pharmaceutical companies have been changed due to ethical reason.

health facilities, especially in terms of availability of pharmaceutical products set the field for anthropological intervention. There is a unique form of sociality involved with the pharmaceutical promotion as it involves doctors, patients and the medical representatives all through a different set of interests. Doctors generally think in terms of therapeutic excellence, goodwill and patient benefit. Generally the doctors decide to shift from one brand to another because of certain drop in price and even because of their usual nature of experimentation with new research molecules in the pursuit therapeutic excellence. Patients think in terms of possible remedial measures. North Kolkata is no different regarding pharmaceutical business on behalf of the medical representatives and the other stakeholders. The gifts exchanged during the pharmaceutical promotion and similar rationales of the other stakeholders involved led the present study to be keener on the lived experiences of each position involved in health care business. Although the design of the present research is not focused on the issues from an insider's perspective to provide a detailed contextual account of participants (Oldani 2002; Oldani 2004), but with the certain themes like (a) Pharmaceutical promotion and Drug Rep, (b) Doctors and Prescription Behavior, (c) Medicines distributors and Suppliers and (d) Patient and their Well being this study will try to portray a collage of actual practices and how it is been shaped by pharmaceutical agencies.

PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTION AND “DRUG-REPS”

Pharmaceutical company is told to be perceived generally by their respective performances in the highly competitive world of drug marketing. They generally take each and every step with clear goal in mind and under a preconceived perception of market to obtain success at any circumstance. There is a well-organized sales-promotional wing formed by head sales manager, regional sales manager, area sales manager and the medical representatives in a hierarchic structure. Each of these positions has their respective responsibilities in the organization. A head sales manager is usually responsible for the total sales and marketing of a particular company. Similarly the regional and the area sales managers are responsible for the sale of their respective regions and areas. Often regional managers distribute their respective “target” amongst the area under their concern. Actually a target is fixed on the basis of the need of a particular territory and the specific product range. The area target is then distributed amongst several territories following similar rules. The medical representatives or the “drug reps” are in charge of these territories. Usually each of these territories has a list of doctors and other stakeholders, who set up the field for a pharmaceutical business. It is clear in the statements of these sales representatives speaking of their responsibilities.

“I have to check also whether my customers are happy with the products.....are they're satisfied? Are they getting enough benefits that can further go to my credit from the products that I've already sold?”

—MR, Plink.

“I am also responsible for calling on pharmacies in my territory to keep my self up to date on my products and my competition”.

—MR, Medpic

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The particular cases clearly show how MRs proceed towards the relations, especially when it comes to making a relation with doctors. The MRs cannot make the list of the doctors on their own rather the “list of doctors” with which MRs operate is also a part of the pre-existing set of things. Even the MRs have to seek a prior permission before adding or deleting any particular doctor under a territory. Normally the superior authority checks the business potential before giving signals to proceed in the act.

“I manage a territory in this area that contains three hundred doctors. My territory contains Dd Cantonment Hospital (south) & Dd Municipality Hospital where I have to visit regularly from the list of 300 physicians. I along with my partners and my superiors in the company prepared the list”.

—MR, Medpic

Getting success in the culture of wining over all the obstacles for sale is the most evident part of pharmaceutical promotion. In spite of a lot of pro-people gestures providing basic health facilities, often the parameters are set in and around the successful business exchange. But these images often do not come in public, as these mostly remain within their employees through managerial speeches and sales strategies. These hidden guidelines set the base for pharmaceutical promotion. Ideally an MR has to sell product to the patients through doctor. In so doing there are certain relationships that often come handy. Firstly and most importantly how the MRs or for that matter the pharmaceutical companies decide on the categorization of doctors:

“In our company, we decide about a particular doctor’s importance, on the basis of the monthly sale given by him. Out of the total number of two hundred and fifty doctors in a territory there are two kinds of doctors.

1. Primary-Golden Doctor—who gives a sale of more than Rs.1.75 Laks
2. Secondary-Silver Doctor—who gives a sale between Rs. 50000–1 Laks in a month to our company.”

It shows mostly the pharmaceutical companies select doctors on the basis of optimum patient pool who are suitable customers of their brand. For similar reasons the MR from Xcare Pvt. Ltd always specifically look towards the specialists like ENT, Orthopaedic, Dermatologist and Gynaecologist as they produce those specialties of brands. In spite of quite a small ambience in terms of its volume and market share both in comparison to the multinationals and the other big domestic companies, a company like Medpic also acknowledges the importance of the field force.

“If people don’t believe me or they don’t have the belief in my product then it wouldn’t be out there in market.... I have to ensure that they believe in my product. I have to convince them that it is superior to other available products in the market. Thus I specifically look into a doctor’s profile and search doctors who have potential to write my products”.

—MR, Xcare Pvt. Ltd

Huge amount of money is spent for the tanning to develop competent personnel with suitable communication skills, personality, leadership qualities for severe competition in the market. Representatives are the sole faces through whom companies transact with their customers. For example, one MR has to understand on one’s own “how a doctor thinks; what he wants in

terms of chemical content". Such information are very important in the formulation of the future strategies, suppose a doctor is writing particular brand of medicine that contains the same formulation but does not have a particular feature a MR has in his brand. In the next meeting with the doctor MR usually highlights that particular additional feature of his product to get a competitive advantage over other companies as well as to get the customer. The case of the MR from Medpic was similar instance where he was able to convince his customer.

"A particular brand of Syrup in our company comes in the volume of 120ml, I have come to know from the chemist shops that the doctor usually prescribes that its competitor brand, and even I didn't have any competitive advantage in terms of a formulation over my competition. In the next meeting I have told the doctor.....when we are using a syrup, our usual practice is to waste some portion of it, either in cap or in the body of the bottle for this reason our brand will be more suitable in comparison to our competitor brand that comes in a form 100ml pack. And the doctor was convinced".

This is only the primary part of pharmaceutical promotion. To back it up often the MRs go to the pharmacy owners stockists to check whether their efforts are actually producing results. Even for OTC products or sale without a prescription, the role of retailer becomes very vital as the target on those products for a month can be achieved through four to five chemist shops only. Chemist often pushes that particular brand to them with whom he has a good informal relation. Same way the relations between MR and Stockiest and Sub-Stockiest are also dependent on this parameter. Often the 'informal' 'manipulative' 'give and take' relationship is found between a successful MR and these category of sellers in the business organization of Pharmaceutical companies. This is how an MR successfully implements those strategies to build a successful and viable business relation.

DOCTORS AND PRESCRIPTION BEHAVIOR

Generally doctors are keen to emphasize upon the aspects of patient benefit. But often the underlying rationale behind practices leads towards the questionable part of the medical practice. What does actually a doctor think when he talks about patient benefit? Isn't the patient benefit connected to the benefit of a doctor also? If such is the case then the underlying dimension of such practices also points towards another harsh reality of health-care practices. The usual practice amongst the doctors is to:

- "Step 1 : Define the patient's problem
- Step 2 : Specify the therapeutic objective
- Step 3 : Verify whether your Pre-treatment is suitable for this patient
- Step 4 : Start the treatment
- Step 5 : prescribe proper medicine.
- Step 6 : Give information, instructions and warnings
- Step 7 : Monitor (stop) the treatment"

—General Practitioner, DD

Perhaps the first three steps say it all. That means a doctor decides about the particular problem of the patient and then also he/she has options to cure it along with strong consideration on

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patients economic condition. Because, the therapeutic rationale, affordability and expectation by patients play an important factor as the doctors choose particulars brand of products.

'I can not prescribe a product of *Richbuck* product to a Rickshaw puller, as he can not afford it'

—General Practitioner, DD

"Quality of medicine is most important to me as it not only helps curing the disease but also helps in building reputation. Physicians like us both on the basis of company image and consistent check on the Physiological implication of a product, judge the quality. So a particular company's image is also another factor that is on the higher side of my list for priority when it comes to prescribing a medicine.....besides these, a 'sharp drop in price by the competitor brand' and 'trial to a new research molecule' launched in the same therapeutic category are other principal reasons for a physician to shift their prescription to the competitor brand".

—A Practicing MD of a Govt. Hospital

The case above reveals that doctors' thoughts prescription may never be certain and sustained. Certain doctors possess a particular tendency towards the trail of new research molecule. But interestingly enough, one of the above cases mentions about a very important aspect of health care practices that prescription of a particular brand may enhance a doctor's reputation. Doctors also know about the promotional strategies for pharmaceutical companies. They also consider it as a part of medical profession. Even some of them actually are quite sympathetic to the role of sales representatives.

"A regular visit by a smart, dedicated, well-groomed medical representatives having 'soft skills' is the best tool of promotion for a pharmaceutical company".

—MD of a Govt. Hospital

There are other available modes of pharmaceutical promotions available like;

1. Though advertisement or through publication in medical journals;
2. Promotional acts and the provision of free drug samples through pharmaceutical representatives;
3. Incentives to clinicians e.g., travel and research grants and other monetary benefits and
4. Direct consumer marketing

—MD of a Pvt. Nursing Home

Some of the doctors openly admit that they eventually submit to these modes of promotional behavior; long hard work schedules and persistent effort of MR by trying to convince doctors on a particular research molecule eventually get essential response. In that promotional process the doctors are even gifted that they consider as 'small ones' such as pens, pen stands, lunch packets, promotional literatures and journals. Some of the doctors even expect such 'professional' and 'academic' gifts like, B.P. machines, E.C.G. machines etc. These are said to help their cause in health service. Although the opinions are divisible even amongst the doctors, for example;

"They help in updating our knowledge apart from keeping us well informed about the products... . Some of the details like chemical content or age specific dosage that is usually marked in the pens, pen-stands, literature may even help us to remember the tiny details on therapeutic aspects".

And

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“Why a doctor is given an imported car by a pharmaceutical company?...its because of his ability to influence both the decisions of the patients, the end users and also in cases, some of other doctors who follow his prescription”.

Such remarks of the doctors themselves reflect on the possibilities of unethical alliance between the doctors and pharmaceutical companies. There are doctors who provide sale to a pharmaceutical company under any circumstance, even if they have to compromise on patient benefit. Generally those doctors, whose personal benefits are taken care of by the pharmaceutical companies, engage in such exchange and not likely to think about the patient benefits.

The general gifts like pen, pen-stand, ECG machine, or any such gift related to academic practices that are supposed to supplement their professional knowledge are readily accepted in all quarters of the doctors. They don't even consider those as unethical. But there are instances of 'gifts' considered as unethical by most of the practitioners. It can be anything right from paying the bill of doctor's dress materials to an emolument as his wife's ornaments. There are other important relational factors involved to a MR-doctor relationship that influences the risky prescription behavior of doctors. There are particular doctors, who have tendencies of trying new research molecule, but are very much aware of dangers of prescribing unknown brands without knowing their therapeutic implications.

MEDICINES DISTRIBUTORS AND SUPPLIERS

The process of generation of prescription is not easy. The script of prescription is symbol of physiological implication of particular patient; it also implies accountability and integrity of doctor's role towards healing; on the other it signifies integral relation with patient's beliefs of cure; it is also a sign of potential business to have for the both the company and several of its direct participatory agencies, like stockist, sub-stockist and chemist shops. This participatory group mostly poses responsibility in the distribution of medicinal objects. Doctor as the most apparent pivot of the process mostly decides on the basis of several interconnected factors, but they also take a good hard look in to the promotional futures and even appearance and the persistence and several others aspects of any MR. However, an MR, to be successful in making a doctor prescribe respective company's products, has to ensure the product availability. The marketing agencies have to acquire skill in knowing the roles and requirements of this distribution network:

“Today the competition is multidirectional... even it exists not only among customers but in the entire marketing network. It is quite obvious that, if a company wants to appoint a new distributor/ stockist, the first step would be to prepare a list of competitors”.

What was observed from the cases that most of the companies studied followed a similar pattern even in terms of the distribution chain itself; a company usually transacts with big agencies whose requirements are quite large in scale. A company usually targets those agencies where the company has its good base of customers. Actually it's a quite rational on behalf of the distributive companies only to select certain local agencies/stockists, where the chances of sale are at a higher probability. But the patients do not buy the medicines from any office of the stockist; they buy it from chemist shops, thus determining the chain of distribution

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extending itself to the patient's end in the form of supplementary actions. Provincial Chemical Drug Association decides on the number of stockists in an area. As per their rule, normal stock points should not be exceeding more than 6-7 in an area. Now it could not be possible for a stockist to extend monopoly over a growingly larger area if the stockist does not appoint a number of sub-stockists. As they say,

"These are basically unauthorized stockists who purchase stocks from stockists and in turn sell it to different channels of retailers, and even the hospitals".

All these agencies and chain of retailers are tied with each other in a chain of business interests, because pharmaceutical companies in this urban region gives 10% of their profit to their stockists, who provide 9% of profit to the sub-stockists working under them and subsequently the sub-stockist provide 20% of their profit to the retailers. The main agencies give mostly the medicines to several existing sub-agencies/sub-stockist in different areas considering the scales of demand and reports of sale from pre-existing stocks. Again these sub stockists supply these medicines to the chemist shops from where the patients actually buy it. Pharmaceutical companies have to assure always that all customers at the levels of stockists, sub-stockists and chemist shops/pharmacies are happy about their business in seeking growing profit out of each purchase. On the contrary any particular agency is not the permanent part of the total system entailed by a pharmaceutical company. All such companies compete in the market of agencies to strategize the promotion of their sales and profit. The rate of order is highly dependent on the market sale and performance of the product:

"Our strategy is to double the sale and then deduct the remaining stock of medicine that has not been sold... the obtained amount is what we order for the next month".

—An Agency.

These are all free business agencies and with their rational choices with a keen eye on the business outcome. There is a definite role of the monitoring the relational aspects of the business chain, especially where there are other available avenues to make definite profit in business outcome.

PATIENTS' CHOICES AND THEIR WELL-BEING

All the practices above are built on and around patient-doctor transactions, which give any pharmaceutical company to ground their therapeutic solution into people's [patients'] lives. In fact, the MRs also express that pharmaceuticals often sell the disease before they sell its medicine. Their research publication in the scientific literature is only a part of such the deeply rooted strategy. There lies the inevitable question that for whose benefit is it working? Whether it's the patient or a pharmaceutical company or any other intermediaries on the network? Generally the participants or intermediaries involved with the pharmaceutical network willingly or unwillingly engage in bargain for better outcome in the business of exchange. Although a doctor may not share the similar interest in the pharmaceutical network, at least some of them are seen to capitalize on such business avenues. Usually the patients are not even aware about such dimension of interests behind a particular medicine or for that matter a prescription.

Patients often consider a doctor next to god or god himself as savior of life and health.

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Usually they judge their doctors on various criteria of choice; often the sanctity and sensibility of a knowledgeable personality as provider of healing is most emphasized criterion. It was often found that irrespective of their socioeconomic background, patients do not like a doctor, who is not polite and doesn't pay satisfactory care to the patients. A group discussion with the patients waiting in queue resulted in the following remarks:

"A doctor should be attentive and a good listener... and he should make me feel that I am the most important person in the consultation room and my problems are indeed most significant of them all".

The general expectation amongst all sections of patients is to get the desirable result of their treatment. Even the popularity and aspects of pleasing personalities often play an important role in their selection. As one of the middle class housewife, Suparna Bhattacharya aged thirty years told that;

"A doctor himself is best publicity to his own patients. The impression the patient has about his doctor, the kind and considerate treatment that he had received, are the factors which influence patient's relatives and friends to seek the same doctor".

Thus usually the first local practice among the patients is search for a doctor, who is locally acknowledged to be a better healer of certain diseases in the "market of doctors". Such doctor's service is well-spread (*pasar*) in the locality. After that, the patients want their doctor to be easily communicable. It was found from a case that a home-making lady usually chooses those doctors who prescribe less number of medicines, because due to her tough schedule of household responsibilities she often forgets to take all medicines.

While choosing a doctor another home-making female patient seeks those 'good' local doctors, who are known to prescribe low-cost medicine, because, for a "lower middle class family" a home-making wife like her sees it very important to spend lowest for common diseases in accordance with the monthly budget. The local patients also consider principally the cost of the treatment, the period of recovery and local acceptance as a good doctor as well. Many of the local lower-income patients avail governmental facilities and other free health facilities those are affordable for them.

Sukla Roy, a homemaker married lady from higher income group, thinks that a prescription is also a sign of relation or exchange. According to her, the qualities such as

"Kindness, ethics and honesty in practice, a constant up-gradation of professional knowledge and clinical skills, maintaining good patient-service records, maintaining good communication with patients and their relatives, maintaining a doctor-patient confidentiality, allowing for other opinions and referral to colleagues, consciousness about cost of healthcare often leads a patient to a particular doctor".

This particular case also shows that although she can afford any doctor but also expects her ideal return. She does assert again,

"A doctor should be prompt and timely in diagnosis and treatment for proper cure. I have also changed my physician, locally popular for his service, as he was not rightly attentive and patient with me."

The case of a male rickshaw puller of forty-two years belongs to lower income group shows about another important aspect. Whenever he seeks medical advice, he usually visits with

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doctor in nearest Hospital or Health Camp's (*Sastha Shibir*) outdoor chamber. It helps him easily affording a doctor's visit. Even from the hospital or *Sastha Shibir*, he collects the price-free medicines whatever the doctor's have prescribed for him. Doctors sometime provide him with 'physician's sample drugs' given by Medical Representatives. These are all the benefits, which he usually gains from the doctors in such health services because of his lower economic position. Generally how quickly a doctor cures his disease and puts him back on to his work again is the only criterion on the basis of which he searches a doctor. However, without any direct exposure of to pharmaceutical culture the patient parties irrespective of income-groups are observed actually unaware of the relations of pharmaceutical companies with the medical practitioners that influence the practices regarding prescription of medicines.

CONCLUSION

The work is an attempt to provide an ethnographic picture of health care practices in the region of Northern part of an Indian metropolis Kolkata. The ethnographic study of all the direct stakeholders including medical representatives from four pharmaceutical companies and their customers as doctors, stockists and chemists along with the patients endeavours to explain the disjunction of two processes of health services (a) that in business network of pharmaceutical companies targeting the doctors via intermediaries and (b) that in the seeking of health-care among the urban patients in choosing and evaluating the services of doctors. It reflected on the nature and rationale with which doctors, at the center of the two processes, proceed towards therapeutic solutions and have to negotiate between two groups of interests, including or excluding own vested ones. In the pursuit therapeutic excellence and/or popularity, often they decide to shift from one brand to another because of certain factors like drop in price or because of their nature of experimentation with new research molecule. Doctors know that if a patient is benefited then eventually they will also get their benefit of earning more from the locality and satisfaction with the profession. The instances of doctors taking costly personal gifts, although considered unethical even by some of the medical practitioners themselves, reflect the possibility of sacrificing the aspect of patient benefit. Because of their possession and control over therapeutic knowledge, doctors always enjoy the power and prestige to capitalize on such situations even if it in an unethical way. This actually gives the scope to various companies to target more profitable customers in doctors; to go for more sustained promotional acts without bothering about the better chemical formulation. That is one of the main strategic aspects of the pharmaceutical marketing today. There are many more companies who are producing similar formulation, but those with the superior brand positions are winning the race.

Often relations of the companies via MRs with their clients play a vital role in pharmaceutical marketing. Thus, the roles, practices and strategies in sustaining relations with the customers are found to be very important personnel involved with pharmaceutical sales promotion. This study shows that often the MRs tend to be more keen to make such relation only with those doctors, who help the MRs "performing" in favor of more sales. The pressure of achievement may compel the MRs to do some thing that is conflicting to the health interests of patients and usually considered as unethical. Day in and day out an MR has to keep on

being persistent enough in his efforts to attain success. The promotional activities of the pharmaceutical companies invoke quite an influence on the doctors. The instances of providing gifts to the doctors during the course of promotion make it clear. The doctors are quite aware about the ethics of receiving such gifts from a pharmaceutical company. More often the doctors may submit to the pressure of sale via such sales promotional activities, even if that is in conflict with the interest of a patient. Doctors also believe that their interactions with drug companies have educational value and also provide benefits for patients, because the doctors may remain well informed about available and updated medicines and the poor patients can get free drug samples provided by different companies. Although most of the doctors contend that they are all invulnerable to any drug company but in actual practice opposite cases were found simultaneously. It's the magic of a successful promotion that makes the doctors to come under 'rated' umbrella and often that gives a pharmaceutical nexus its specific form. It's the combined and allied objectives of all the intermediaries that gives pharmaceutical marketing its true essence and health care practices its reality. Often it directs them to act behave in certain way as if they are "the true armature of the cultural order" (Mazzarella 2004:852 cited Sahlins1976:217).

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Address for correspondence: Arnab Das, Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35, Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700 019.
E-mail: arnab_katha@yahoo.co.in

ASSESSMENT OF UNDERNUTRITION AMONG BAURI PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN OF NITURIA BLOCK, PURULIA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

Subal Das¹ and Kaushik Bose¹

Abstract : Preschool children are in the developmental stage (functional) of life any impairment in their growth can reduce physical, mental and intellectual potential. The objective of the study is to understand the prevalence of undernutrition among 2-6 year old pre-school children of Bauri caste of Nituria Block, Purulia, West Bengal, India. A community based cross sectional study was conducted and measured in 219 pre-school children in five different villages. Anthropometric measurements, height and weight were made following standard techniques. Height-for-age (HAZ), weight-for-age (WAZ) and weight-for-height (WHZ) <-2 z-scores were used to assess stunting, underweight and wasting, respectively, following the NCHS Guidelines. Severity of undernutrition was done on the basis of classification of WHO recommendations. The result revealed that the mean HAZ, WAZ and WHZ were less than (negative value) those of NCHS for both sexes at all ages. Values ranged from -0.91 (HAZ for boys aged 5 years) to -2.05 (WAZ for girls aged 2 years). The overall (age and sex combined) rates of stunting, underweight and wasting were 37.0 %, 48.4 % and 21.5% respectively. Thus, the present study clearly indicated that the nutritional situation of these children was not satisfactory.

Keywords: Bauri, India, stunting, underweight, wasting.

INTRODUCTION

Undernutrition, type of malnutrition arises due to the intake of less food than what is required for proper growth, maintenance and development of the body. Child nutritional status is an essential component of a country's overall human development. There is a growing consensus that poor nutritional status during childhood (or even in utero) can have long-lasting scarring consequences into adulthood, both in terms of health and mortality, and in terms of other measures of human capital such as schooling and productivity^[1-2].

Bauri, a cultivating, earth-working, and palanquin-bearing caste of Western Bengal, whose features and complexion stamp them as of non-Aryan descent, although evidence is wanting to affiliate them to any particular tribe now in existence. The Bauri are divided into nine sub-castes. Some of them may perhaps be nothing more than different local names for what was originally the same sub-caste, but this point is not really very material, by reason of the marked reluctance of the lower castes to intermarry families living at a distance. Bauri admit into their caste members of any caste higher than themselves in social standing. Bauri profess to be Hindus of the Sakta sect, but in Western Bengal, at any rate, their connection with Hinduism is of the slenderest kind, and their favourite objects of worship are Manasa, Bhadu, Mansingh, Barpahari, Dharmaraj, and Kudrasini. The socioeconomic background of Bauris is very low^[3].

Globally it is estimated that among preschool-age children in developing countries 183 million are underweight, 226 million are stunted and 67 million wasted^[4]. India has the highest

¹Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore-721102 West Bengal, India.

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occurrence of childhood malnutrition in the world^[5]. One out of every three children fewer than five in developing countries is malnourished. It is a major drain on developing countries' prospects for development because malnourished children require more intense care from their parents and are less physically and intellectually productive as adults.

There is absence of representative data on the nutritional status of Bauri preschool children. In view of this, the present investigation studies the prevalence of undernutrition among 2-6 year old scheduled caste (Bauri) preschool children of Purulia District, West Bengal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area and Subjects

The present study was cross-sectional and community based conducted in five different villages (Ramkanali, Raghudi, Garponchokot, Mekatala & Rampur) of Nituria Block, Purulia district, that are situated about 250km from Kolkata city, the provincial capital of West Bengal. These villages were chosen as they were predominantly populated by Bauris. This study was carried out from January to April 2008. A total of 219 (130 boys and 89 girls) randomly selected pre-school children aged 2-6 years were measured. The available preschool children in villages were measured from each village at the time of study. The estimated number of study subjects (preschool children) was calculated to be 96 by the formula: $n = (z^2pq)/d^2$, where $z = 1.96$, p is the prevalence of undernutrition (50%) in children under the age of six years, $q = 1-p$ and d is the desired precession (10 %)^[6]. Data were collected after obtaining the necessary approval from the parents, villages and block authorities and parents were informed about the objectives before the commencement of measurement. The institutional ethical committee approved the data schedule. Information on age, gender, weight and height was collected on a pre-tested questionnaire by house-to-house visit following interview and examination.

ANTHROPOMETRIC MEASUREMENTS

Anthropometric measurements such as height and weight were made by a trained investigator (SD) following the internationally accepted standard techniques (WHO)^[7]. Height and weight measurements were recorded to the nearest 0.1cm and 0.5kg respectively.

Three commonly used undernutrition indicators- stunting, underweight and wasting- were used to evaluate the nutritional status of the subjects. The United States National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)^[8] age- and sex- specific -2 z-scores was followed to define stunting, underweight and wasting. The following scheme was utilized:

Stunting: <-2 HAZ (z-score for height-for-age);

Underweight: <-2 WAZ (z-score for weight-for-age);

Wasting: <-2 WHZ (z-score for weight-for-height).

Where HAZ, WAZ and WHZ refer to height-for-age, weight-for-age and weight-for-height age- and sex- specific z-scores, respectively, of NCHS.

We followed the WHO^[7] classification for assessing severity of malnutrition by percentage prevalence ranges of these three indicators among children.

Statistical Analyses

The distribution of height and weight were not significantly skewed, therefore not necessitating their normalization. Between sexes, differences in means of height and weight were tested by Student's t-test. One-way (Scheffe's Procedure) analyses were undertaken to test for age difference in mean height and weight in each sex. All statistical analysis was undertaken using the Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

There is no significant sex difference in boys and girls height. Significant sex difference in mean weight was observed at age 5 years. For both height as well as weight, there existed significant increasing age trends in both sexes. However, growths in boys were more significant than the girls.

Results revealed that the mean HAZ, WAZ and WHZ were less than (negative value) those of NCHS for both sexes at all ages. These values ranged from -0.91 (HAZ for boys aged 5 years) to -2.05 (WAZ for girls aged 2 years).

The frequencies of stunting, underweight and wasting are presented in Table 1. The overall (age and sex combined) rates of stunting, underweight and wasting were 37.0%, 48.4% and 21.5% respectively. The rates of stunting, underweight and wasting were higher among boys (stunting = 40.0 %; underweight = 46.9% and wasting = 20.8%) compared with girls (stunting = 32.5 %; underweight = 50.6% and wasting = 22.5%). Based on World Health Organization classification of severity of malnutrition, the overall rate of stunting was high (30-39%), whereas those of underweight (c" 30%) and wasting (c" 15%) were very high.

DISCUSSION

Undernutrition continues to be a cause of ill-health and premature mortality among children in developing countries like India^[9]. The most commonly used indicators of undernutrition among children are stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height) and underweight (low weight for age). Stunting is an indicator of chronic undernutrition, the result of prolonged food deprivation and/or disease or illness; wasting is an indicator of acute undernutrition, the result of more recent food deprivation or illness; underweight is used as a composite indicator to reflect both acute and chronic undernutrition although it cannot distinguish between them^[7].

These indices are compared against an international reference population developed from anthropometric data collected in the United States by the NCHS^[8]. Children whose measurements fall below -2 z-scores of the reference population median are considered undernourished, i.e. to have stunting, wasting or to be underweight. These indices reflect distinct biological processes, and their use is necessary for determining appropriate interventions^[7].

Studies done by the scholars in this field have shown more or less similar prevalence of (50.5%) and (48.0%) undernutrition among the children^[10, 11]. Other studies shown very high prevalence of (85.2%), (73.2%) and (63.70%) undernutrition compared with the present study^[12-14].

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The results of the present study clearly indicated that, based on World Health Organization classification of severity of malnutrition, the overall prevalence of stunting was high (30-39%), whereas those of underweight (e" 30%) and wasting (e" 15%) were very high.

Since the nutritional status of the subjects of the present study is not satisfactory, it seems that there is scope for much improvement in dietary intake in the form of supplementary nutrition. Because malnutrition has many causes, only multiple and synergistic interventions embedded in true multisectoral programmes can be effective^[15]. This important point must be born in mind before the authorities plan effective strategies to reduce the prevalence the undernutrition among children in this population. Moreover, they would also provide useful datasets for comparisons. However, one of the limitations of our study was the lack information on correlates of malnutrition. Future investigations should study the various correlates of malnutrition.

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that the nutritional status of the pre-school children of Bauri community of these villages is in critical situation. To overcome this problem there is an immediate requirement for appropriate steps to be taken to improve nutritional status of this ethnic group in Purulia.

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Table 1. Stunting, underweight and wasting by age and sex.

Age (years)	No. of Children	Stunting			Underweight			Wasting		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2	36	11 (30.6)	6 (16.7)	17 (47.2)	13 (36.1)	10 (27.8)	23 (63.9)	5 (13.9)	5 (13.9)	10 (27.8)
3	40	10 (25.0)	5 (12.5)	15 (37.5)	9 (22.5)	8 (20.0)	17 (42.5)	4 (10.0)	4 (10.0)	8 (20.0)
4	44	14 (31.8)	3 (6.8)	17 (38.6)	14 (31.8)	5 (11.4)	19 (43.2)	4 (9.1)	4 (9.1)	8 (18.2)
5	61	8 (13.1)	7 (11.5)	15 (24.6)	15 (24.6)	12 (19.7)	27 (44.3)	10 (16.4)	7 (11.5)	17 (27.9)
6	38	9 (23.7)	8 (21.1)	17 (44.7)	10 (26.3)	10 (26.3)	20 (52.6)	4 (10.5)	0 (0.0)	4 (10.5)
Age Combined	219	52 (40.0)	29 (32.5)	81 (37.0)	61 (46.9)	45 (50.6)	106 (48.4)	27 (20.8)	20 (22.5)	47 (21.5)

Percentages are presented in parentheses.

Address for correspondence: Dr. Kaushik Bose, Reader, Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore-721102 West Bengal. E-mail: banda@vsnl.net

A STUDY ON THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN RISK SCORE OF CHD AND OBESITY MEASURES

Diptendu Chatterjee¹ Jyoti Ratan Ghosh², and Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay³

Abstract: Coronary heart disease is a great threat to us. Obesity related non-communicable diseases; including coronary heart disease is considerably associated with high accumulation of calorie and uneven or less expenditure of calorie due to inadequate physical activity. The objective of the present study is to understand the association between risk score of coronary heart disease and obesity measures in adult Bengalee population. In the present study 249 adult Bengalee individuals including 141 male and 108 female were considered. Mean age of male was 38.99 ± 14.92 years and for female 36.06 ± 13.42 years. Significant sex difference was observed ($P < 0.05$) in height, weight, body mass index, heart disease risk score and waist hip ratio. In order to understand the association between risk score and obesity measures, the results revealed significant positive correlation of total coronary risk score with body mass index, waist hip ratio and waist stature ratio in males, however in female significant positive correlation observed only with body mass index.

Keywords: Obesity, BMI, CVD Risk score.

INTRODUCTION

Health policy of a nation is very much important to avoid the health hazards of the people of the nation. Now medical technology developed largely and increases the life expectancy of the people by introducing life saving drugs and modern gadgets. Obesity is a great threat to us. In the present day, we are far behind from vigorous activity and mainly due to uneven expenditure of calorie obesity developed. Obesity may be one of the major factors for non-communicable diseases such as Hypertension, CHD and NIDDM (Al-Hazza *et al*, 2002; Baumgartner *et al*, 1989; Burger *et al*, 2004; Chumlea *et al*, 1986; Corbin *et al*, 2000; Farquhar *et al*, 1988; Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay 2007). Considering Indians Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is 50% to 100% higher than the Americans. The average age of first sign of heart disease among Indians varies from below 40 years (Gupta *et al*, 2002). The major risk factors are smoking, hypertension, stress, obesity, and others. There is correct dosage of medicine for treating an illness, but there is no correct dosage of physical activity for promoting health benefits and developing physical fitness (Kopelman *et al*, 2000; Shephard *et al*, 1991). In view of the above, the present study is an attempt to understand the association between risk score of CHD and obesity measures in adult Bengalee population.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

249 adult individual including 141 male and 108 female were considered. Measurements were taken from a health awareness fare from Bally, Howrah. Measurements were made following the standard technique (Lohman *et al*, 1988). All individuals were free from any disease, male

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology Bangabasi College

²Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, PSV, Visva-Bharti

³Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

were service holder but female were all housewife and all of them did not involved in any dynamic physical activity. Body mass indexes (BMI), Waist hip ratio (WHR) Waist stature ratio (WSR) were computed following the standard equations. $BMI = \text{Weight (Kg)}/\text{Height (m}^2\text{)}$, $WHR = \text{Waist circumference (cm)} / \text{Hip circumference (cm)}$, $WSR = \text{Waist circumference (cm)}/\text{Height (cm)}$. Heart disease risk score was calculated using the standard questionnaire (Corbin *et al* 2000). Data were analyzed using the SPSS (Version- 10.0) and cut off has been set as $p < 0.05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The mean age were 38.99 ± 14.92 years and 36.06 ± 13.42 years for males and females, respectively (Table 1). Significant sex difference was observed ($P < 0.05$) in height, weight, body mass index, heart disease risk score and waist hip ratio (Table 1). Examination on risk scores for CHD revealed significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher risk score in males compared to that of the females. In order to understand the association between risk score and obesity measures, the results revealed significant ($p < 0.05$) positive correlation between total coronary risk score and body mass index, waist hip ratio and waist stature ratio in males, however in female significant ($p < 0.05$) positive correlation observed only with body mass index (Table 2). With regards to the un-alterable risk scores both the sexes demonstrated similar results but in alterable risk score male were positioned in a higher group, this might be due to life style factor. On the other hand, females demonstrated a trend of higher general adiposity in terms of higher BMI compared to that of the males, but revealed less risk for CHD (Table 2). Epidemiological studies, however, suggested vascular actions of female hormones and functional implications (Miller and Duckles 2008) might be one of the imperative factors for reduction of Total Risk Scores (TRS) in females. Examination on based (Table 3) on unalterable (age and sex) and alterable risk factors (different obesity measures) TRS demonstrated significant positive correlation with TRS and age in both the sexes. On the other hand, significant positive correlation has been found in all obesity measures of males and similar result has been encountered only in BMI for females. The cardinal feature of the present study in the Bengalee population vindicated that BMI might be one of the quality surrogate measure to identify risk factor for CHD in both the sexes.

Table 1. Characteristics of the studied population

Variables	Male		Female	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Age (year)	48.99	14.92	43.06	13.42
Height (cm)	164.92	6.92	150.80	13.53
Weight (kg)	64.96	12.90	59.30	13.24
BMI	23.67	4.05	25.49	5.71
WHR	0.899	0.059	0.866	0.077
WSR	0.512	0.060	0.556	0.075

A Study on the association between risk score of CHD and obesity measures

Table 2. Analysis of risk score within the population

RATING	Range	Un alterable risk score		Range	Alterable risk score		Range	Total risk score	
		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female
Very High	9 & Above	21	01	21 & Above	05	01	31 & Above	03	0
High	7-8	87	16	15-20	86	60	26-30	18	03
Average	5-6	31	50	11-14	48	45	16-25	120	97
Low	4 or Less	02	41	10 or Less	02	02	15 or Less	0	08

Male = 141 and Female = 108

Table 3. Correlation of age and obesity measures with Risk score

Variables	TRS	TRS
	Male	Female
AGE	0.599*	0.588*
BMI	0.303*	0.432*
WHR	0.198*	0.176
WSR	0.343*	0.104

* p<0.05

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Address for correspondence: Dr. Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35, Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.
E-mail: arup_cu@rediffmail.com

THE WEAVERS AND THEIR WOES: A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE TRADITIONAL WEAVERS LIVING AT THE URBAN MARGIN IN WEST BENGAL

Abhradip Banerjee^a, Gopalkrishna Chakrabarti^b and Arnab Das^c

Abstract: Industrialization and its effect since long have been in focus with regard to changing handloom tradition of local groups of weavers in West Bengal. Different perspectives of addressing handloom as both a marginal economy and a quite significant industry in context of Indian industrialization certainly have attracted academic attention to the present state of handloom and the reason behind its decline. Most of the studies based on econometric methods advocated on the effect of industrialization and intrusion of market economy as direct cause which is changing the role, relation and the structure of the organization of production. On the contrary, in the vein of qualitative and ethnographic approach the present study takes up a case of a weaving community of Begampur, Hooghly district in West Bengal that tries to explore the emerging issues and problems as felt by the local weavers. It shows that phenomenon of economic disempowerment, unemployment, underemployment, low wage and others have been working as factors of estrangement from weaving as insiders' perception of the younger generation. There is a growing trend to try out other newer avenues of earning due to desperate impoverishment of handloom weaving as occupation. This ethnography tries to illuminate the factors in the existing structure and operation of the organizational dynamics. The study of nearly one year also intends to relate them with the broader cultural and developmental policies causing the change at the perceptual level of younger generation to accelerate the process of change in craft or weaving tradition.

Keywords: Industrialization, Handloom Weaving, Organization of Production and Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Handlooms or the traditional weaving industry constitute a timeless facet in India's rich cultural heritage along with its key role in the national economy. Ministry of External Affairs of India accepts that "textiles industry plays a pivotal role through its contribution to industrial output, employment generation, and the export earnings of the country. Currently, it contributes about 14 percent to industrial production, 4 percent to the GDP, and 17 percent to the country's export earnings". In terms of figures provided in the Annual Report-2007-08, Ministry of Textile, handloom provides employment to over 65 lakh people directly or indirectly in the allied activities¹ and occupies second place only after agriculture. Even the element of art and craft present in Indian handlooms makes it a potential sector for the upper segments of domestic

^aSenior Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.

^bProfessor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.

^cSelection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.

¹Ministry of Textile, Annual Report, 2001-02, p. 37.

and global market. The social history of industrialization and the consequences of technological development on local handloom industry remained conspicuous through contrasting scholarly opinion in both Marxian and non-Marxian traditions. Marxist scholars arrived at the general conclusion that there was a great decline in artisanal industries, especially with the advent of the Europeans in the nineteenth century. The non-Marxist scholars refute the conclusion that there was a decline in industry in colonial times. Indeed, using income data, they argued that substituting labour with machinery was an important cause for this (Prasad 2001:281). Bagchi (1972) and Morris (1983) considered a marginal role of artisans in context of industrialization. Others believe that the cotton textile industry certainly has played quite an important role and occupies the premier position in India's industrial life (Birla 1944) along with the other component of textile sector such as mills and power-looms. These components differ in terms of volume of output, technology, the organization of production and often placed in competing positions with one another, in terms of raw materials, markets, etc. Although, there is a dispute regarding the process of decline, concerning mostly the questions, how or why it happened. But still, competition from the mills and power-looms often considered as one of the major causes behind the phenomenon. Birla (1944) showed how 390 mills in operation since 1941 supplemented the handloom industry both in terms of total annual production as well as employment provision². In spite of showing some remarkable features, the cotton textile industry in India in terms of per capita consumption of cotton cloth, provided a low percentage even in those years.

The most evident phenomenon in nineteenth and twentieth century was the decline in the number of handloom weavers a phenomenon known as 'de-industrialization'. However, there is indeed serious debate concerning whether and why deindustrialization actually took place in India (Clingsmith and Williamson 2008). Daniel Thorner (1962:70) was one of the first scholars to investigate the alleged phenomenon of the de-industrialization³ of India, concluded that (i) meticulous analysis of the census data alone provides no ground for believing that de-industrialization occurred in India over the period 1881-1931 and (ii) falling off in the India's national handicrafts, as a phenomenon not peculiar to India situation but a world-wide development affecting different countries at different times. But, according to counter-points (Bagchi 1976:136), such statements ignore/push aside the differential impact of industrial revolution on metropolitan and the colonial countries along with other related issues like numbers of men and lengths of time involved with the two cases. Britain and Germany both were able to supplement the destruction of handicrafts (secondary industry) or loss in the

²There was as many as 390 mills were in operation in 1941 that provided an employment nearly 4.5 lakhs workers per day on average and required nearly 42.5 lakhs bales of cotton, 36 lakhs of which were provided by cotton grown in India. The total annual production of cotton piece goods in India has reached the high-water mark of 4,269 million yards per year, which is supplemented to the extent of nearly 2,000 million yards by the out- put of the handloom industry, which affords employment to thousands of vill agers in their spare hours (Birla 1944).

³A process of decline in the proportion of the working population engaged in secondary industry or a decline in the proportion of the total population dependent on secondary industry.

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older branch with their higher rate of employment in the newer one. But the effect of industrialization on the developing countries is entirely destructive. Improved productivity in both cottage and factory goods led to a decrease in world textile prices, making production in India increasingly uneconomic (Roy 2002.b). "The process of decline tends to be seen as counterpart of increasing capital-intensive technology" (Roy 2002.a:507). Britain first won over India's export market and eventually took over much of its domestic market as well. The colonial policies of industrial development; importing raw cotton from Egypt and America, and selling the converted textile products in India certainly have affected prospect of Indian cotton textile industry. The belief that the 'clash of interest' between the rulers and the ruled that channalized the Indian cotton textile towards the decline (Birla 1944) was a potent weapon in Indian nationalists' critique of colonial rule (see e.g., Dutt, 1906/1960; Nehru, 1947). Often it led dependency school theorists to explain the process through the adverse effect of colonialism and imperialism that doomed the peripheral countries to underdevelopment and poverty (Antlöv 1997). Gradually Great Britain lost her ground as the chief supplier of cotton goods to India as the business leaders and the local people awoke to the full potentialities of their resources. During 1920s and 1930s the handloom industry underwent a transformation when 'weaver-capitalists' began to make considerable technological innovations by buying machine looms, placing them in their own homes and weaving sheds, and started to manufacture cloth on these looms using oil or electric power (Haynes 2001:173).

The effect of Industrialization and the effect that it had on the handloom weaving tradition are not restricted to any particular factor: i) 18th century political chaos, economic decline sandwiched between the stable and prosperous Mughal and British hegemonies ii) India's progressive ruralization in the 19th century owing to the destruction of artisanal employment by British factory-made goods (Nehru 1947) and even iii) a combined factor of dissolution of Mughal hegemony in the 18th century leading to aggregate supply-side problems for Indian manufacturing and deterioration in climatic conditions following the early 1700s, events, which appear to have added greatly to the slump in agricultural productivity, to the rise in grain prices, and thus to deindustrialization (Clingsmith and Williamson 2008:210). Rather, incorporation of several interconnected issues of industrial policies, national politics, identities and perception of local people in the analytical framework might make the above explanations complementary contributing to our overall understanding India's experience (Clingsmith and Williamson 2008:210). Twentieth century, as mentioned earlier, saw the emergence of mill industry as well as the decentralized powerloom sector which has now become the serious competitor to the handlooms. According to Srinivasalu (1996) the official share of the power-looms in India's total textile production increased from 37 per cent in 1980 to 68 per cent in 1995. But, Roy (1999) showed about the differential impact on the handloom weaving industry-while competition in coarse and medium cotton was intense due to technical change and import substitution, weavers of silk and finer cottons survived the onslaught because of the quality and nature of their product. Members of these communities became long-distance traders, and even capitalists in some areas. Successive textile policies of the government have been an exercise in striking a balance between these segments. Handloom, thus, presents a sustainable

model of economic activity that is not energy intensive and has low capital costs, as well as an extensive skill based industry. Its survival in, and adaptability to, a wide range of economic conditions also needs to be understood in a proper perspective, in order to underline the inherent viability of this enterprise.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Handloom weaving like any other craft also involves certain techniques⁴ and objects such as the "material resources, tools, operational sequences and skills, verbal and nonverbal knowledge, and specific modes of work coordination" (Pfaffenberger 1992: 497). The productive process involves acquisition of raw materials, transformation of ideas into physical objects or social fact that can be experienced by others (Wright 1996b:130; Earle 1997: 151–155) and the transfer of objects from makers to users involving equal/unequal classes. It reflects the process socially and culturally embedded in peoples' choices, whereby the label given to such operation is based on classificatory procedure of a given culture (Bernstein 1996: 181). There are manifold problems associated with the handloom industry today, such as 'obsolete technologies', 'unorganized production system', 'low productivity', 'inadequate working capital', 'conventional product range', 'weak marketing link', 'overall stagnation of production and sales' and, above all, 'competition from power-looms and mill sector' hindering its development (Ministry of Textile, Annual Report 2007-08:123).

But these consequential issues of industrialization needs to be seen in terms of more deeply rooted social phenomena like i) fragmentation of economic life from family to society (Long 1996) ii) general breakdown of the socio-economic fabric supporting the activity of traditional handloom weaving industry (Niranjana 2001). Need of the hour is to understand:

- a) How incorporation of new techniques has changed the 'social coordination of labor' that linked techniques and objects to productive processes (Dobres 2000; Lerman et al. 2003; Pfaffenberger 1992; Wright 1996a).
- b) How through participation in various roles, individual are no longer immersed in kinship and narrow occupational structure that inhibits personal development and growth of individuality (Simmel 1990:46).
- c) How the quality and design of the artisan object is affected by commercialization (Stromberg-Pellizi, 1993), which also has an indirect effect on organization of production (Dilley 1986), value distribution (Cook 1993), intergenerational social mobility (Linton 1987; Miner 1973) and the role of women in society (Nash 1993; Hinsch 2003).

FIELD, OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The present study thus, takes up the case of a weaving community of Begampur, Hooghly district in West Bengal in order to understand the effect of Industrialization and its varying consequences on Indian handloom weaving tradition.

⁴Technique is a set of social process that involves materials, equipment, ways of using the equipment, and knowledge (Dobres 2000).

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- a) It tries to explore the emerging issues and problems as felt by the local weavers. Unlike most studies based on econometric method and quantification (Mehta, 1953; Chatterjee 1987; Mishra, 1993; Das 2001)⁵, this study goes deep to analyze several 'element of production system' (Costin 1998)⁶, to understand the problems and other issues in a local handloom weaving tradition and their roles in changing in tradition.
- b) In order to understand the micro level problems of the weavers' in the broad perspective of developmental policies and national economy this study takes a *ethnographic* approach similar to Marcus's (1995) 'multisited ethnographies',⁷ which analyze local in connections to wider flows.⁸
- c) The constituent social relationships among producers, the size and internal structure of the work group, principles of recruitment may give us the clue about the control of the production system as well as the nature of the goods produced along with its network of distribution. Thus, the study initially focuses on elements like
 - i. Technology: involving raw materials, productive processes and the quality & nature of produced object;
 - ii. Organization of production involving participants in a hierarchic structure of roles and responsibilities at different levels of organization as well as the network through which products reach the users or the customers.
 - iii. Lastly highlights the interconnection of these components to unravel their role in change and continuity of production system.

The study has been conducted at village Shirajpur⁹ situated in the area of Begampur Gram Panchayat under the block Chanditala II in the district of Hooghly, West-Bengal. The village is surrounded by neighboring villages like Kahrsarai in western and some part of northern side, Tisa and Joykrishnapur in North, Baro-Shirajpur is Eastern side and Begampur in the

⁵those either focused on current situation or dedicated in explaining the reasons behind the decline in handloom industry.

⁶See the original emphasis by Costin (1998:277) where he mentioned about the six component of production system involving artisans, means of production, organization and social relationships of production, objects, relationships of distribution, and consumers.

⁷Wood (2000:185) has explained how Marcus (1995) talked about 'multisited ethnographies' that is at the same time globally focused and locally situated.

⁸Looking into the issues from the neo-liberal perspectives and terms like complexity (The term "complexity" is always been associated with the number of material inputs, the amount of preparation, the number of steps in the process, the fixity of the procedure, the degree of precision required, the "complexity" of the tools and facilities, and the range of products put out (Costin 1998: 289 Cited White and Pigott, 1996:161), efficiency and output, technology of handloom might not look a complex in its form. But the way tools are used in their associated processes embodying certain dimension energy and knowledge (Hegmon 1998:279; Lechtman 1993:245–246) indicates towards the complex social organization of production associated with spatial distribution of its activities (Costin 1998).

⁹Here the real name of the village was not used over the ethical issue.

South. Historically this place was inside one of the important trade-routes because of its geographical location adjacent to river Swaraswasti (tributary of river Bhagirathi) and the major port Saptagram¹⁰. The location neighboring to Saptagram which gained importance along with the decline of Tamralipta[modern Tamluk]¹¹ and its connection with other important settlements of Baghirathi like Chandernagar, Chinsura, Serampur made it one of the main centre for business (Banerjee 1972:285).

The village Shirajpur is selected purposively because of two principal reasons; i) the number of persons associated to handloom industry and ii) its coexisting tradition of handloom and power-looms. The emphasis on handloom production system of Begampur region leads the present study to the interconnected elements like: a) Processes (including technology & raw materials), and organization of production both spatially and socially allocated in terms of relationships and activities, b) Produced objects and c) Network of distribution that connects its to consumers. Mostly a cumulative attempt of household survey and interviewing are used to understand the nature of occupational structure as well as the organization of production in weaving. Cases of the technology of handloom and power-loom, specific modes of its utilization at different stages of production are also taken. To further understand the organizational role, relation and its specific nature of hierarchy case history, life history and depth interview methods are used. With a view to relating the organizational and processual elements with the emerging problems both interpretation of the depth interviews and the contextual readings are used. The study concludes with the textual narratives and analysis of empirical data to ground the process to its historical roots as epiphenomenon and dynamic forces operative at global level.

HANDLOOM PRODUCTION SYSTEM IN BEGAMPUR REGION

The handloom technology in the area of Begampur and its adaptive mechanisms are relatively moderate in their development. Most of the weavers still employ dobby technique for production of cloth. The coexisting tradition of power-loom has also played a certain part in aggravating the woes of the local artisans. The on-going tension between these two competing productive processes in terms of production and the capability of power-loom to reach the aesthetic requirements of market are thought to aggravate their problems and insecurity. Few years ago there was great resistance from the local artisans to power-loom and even few of them forced some of these power-loom owners to stop production. Now there is an agreement on part of both the parties that power-loom owners may only produce those items that are cheap and targeted towards a particular section of population. This has helped ensuring the interest of local artisans and safety of tradition of handloom weaving in Begampur to certain extent.

¹⁰The meeting point of seven villages namely Bansabati, Krisnapur, Basudebpur, Nityanandapur, Sibpur, Sambokara and Baladmat which in those days cumulatively known as Saptagram (Sur 1986: 257).

¹¹Tamralipta was quite an important centre of sea borne trade of Bengal until Emperor Shahajahan destroyed the Portuguese colonies at Hooghly and Saptagram (Banerjee 1972: 285).

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Shirajpur is a multi-caste village. Total population of Shirajpur is around 2118 among which 48% are Hindu and 52% are Muslim. Therefore, 48% of the population in the village is composed of castes like Barujibi, Karmakar, Sadgope, Kumor, Tanti and Brahmin. In terms of gender distribution 49% of total population is male and 51% is female. In Shirajpur, there are at least 728 people from over 274 families constitute the local handloom weavers, most of whom belong to traditional weaving caste Tanti. Generally males perform the core part, i.e. the very act of production. Females perform the associated jobs, like preparatory and allied activities in the process of production. There are collar machines which are quite coveted even among the resource-less weavers and as many as 10-12 power-looms, which coexist with handlooms in spite of local resistance. The Muslim population in Shirajpur is mostly associated with occupations like coloring of threads, rope making and color business along with disperse occurrence of their association with embroidery work and handloom industry.

I. Processes of Production: Technology, Raw Materials and Products

Technologically the area of Begampur comes only second or third among the places of traditional weaving found in the district. Craft practices have a long history in this district principally in two main traditions of 'Farasdanga' and 'Serampore' (Ray 1961: cxliii). Among the two principal traditions, the former one takes the name of French Chandernagar. All four subdivisions of the district had places like Shamaspur, Dhaniakhaki, Mahmudpur, Gurap [in Hooghly], Rajbalhat, Antpur, Dwarhatta, Begampur, Kharsarai [in Serampur], Haripal, Koinkala [in Chandernagar] and Badangunge, Khanakul, Mayapur [in Arambagh] those are known for their weaving traditions. Begampur is way behind in terms of both the quality and the designs of the objects. The most important centers of traditional weaving are like Dhaniakhali (in the Sub-Division of Hooghly where the counts varies between 60s' to 100s') and Rajbalhaat (in Serampore Sub-Division where the counts varies from 60s' to 130s'). The observations regarding the technology of handloom weaving, use of particular materials, and its associated body of knowledge in a cycle of production will be followed by a discussion of the raw materials, quality and nature of products of weaving. Finally a comparative account of the two coexisting productive processes of handloom-powerloom will be made in order to illuminate the of technology role in fostering people's choice.

Technological Phases: Production of a single object in handloom industry always involves a lot of time and labour, connecting various participatory classes in the organization. The way raw threads are converted into colorful designer items involve labour, skill, artistic imagination, precision as well as "business mind" of entrepreneurial classes to retain viability as a production unit. Different phases of productive process are

- i. Coloring of thread
- ii. Preparatory activities or *suto-bhatano* and *noli-bata*
- iii. Production of back beam or *puruni-kara* and *naraj-gotano*
- iv. *Ba-sana-gantha* and fitting of loom
- v. Weaving or *banidari*

Initially the raw threads are colored using chemical dyes. The raw bundle of yarns are pored in the container (*kardai*) where the color is boiled with water and then these bundles are squeezed out with the help of bamboo sticks. After the initial stages this colored yarns are dried in sun with help of bamboo poles. The cost of the coloring the raw threads vary according to the required treatment used in attaining a particular form of color. For example, there are certain colors like orange, parrot-green which require additional treatment even after the initial stages of coloring. In case of these particular colors the threads are colored again as they need more color after their absorption of the primary coat of colors.

The completely colored raw threads undergo the subsequent processing like preparation of finished fiber, production of back-beam and *ba-sana-gantha*. The process of preparation of finished fiber is locally known as *suto-bhatano* and *noli-pakano*. Usually these acts are performed by the female folks of weaver families. However, at present, the weavers in Shirajpur, very rarely do these job at their houses to meet their own requirements. Rather the trend is to give it to the specialized personnel outside the area to maintain the quality of the product and to compete with the modern market demands. The process involves separation of threads, starching, drying, twisting and rolling of threads in to *latai*, and lastly again these threads are used in forming small reels/*nolis* of threads with the help of *noli-pakano-charka*. There is no separate charge for the production of finished fibers as usually *mahajans* expect this job as a part of actual labor in weaving. The person producing it for other person outside her/his family tends to normally charge between Rupees 3 to Rupees 4 against each *mora*¹² of thread. Two kinds of *noli*, are produced from this process i.e. *tana-noli* and *poren-noli*¹³. Usually the *tana-nolis* are produced prior to the production of *poren-noli's* as a weaver has to give these to the workshop for the 'production of back beam'. *Poren-noli's* are produced later as these are attached into a particular notch within the shuttle and used in weaving horizontal thread.

The *tana-noli's* are given to workshops for the production of back beam. The process of back-beam production is locally known as *puruni-kara* and *naraj-gutano* where the vertical threads are arranged in a specific manner in terms of the intended design in a particular item. Here the *tana-nolis* are attached to a wooden frame that has several shelf where a *noli* can freely rotate. These are arranged in terms of designing requirement. Each color of thread is then rolled into a drum like structure. The threads which have been arranged in specific manner are again rolled back in the back beam of weaving machine. People associated with the production of back beam charge between Rupees 10 to Rupees 12 against each pair of cloth. Usually a back beam contains threads that may produce at least 45 to 50 pair of cloth. In total a person doing the job of *puruni-kara* or *naraj-gotano* can earn between Rupees 450 to Rupees 500 by producing one such back beam.

¹²Mora is unit by which the weavers quantify about the requirement of yarn for production of cloth, they also use this as a measuring unit in case of labour charge. Usually a *mora* contain ten separate bunch of threads, and *noli* is prepared from three such bunches.

¹³*Tana-noli's* are bigger in size and contain the vertical threads (warp). *Poren-noli* are relatively smaller and contain horizontal threads.

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Back-beams are then taken to person who performs the job of *ba-sana-gantha* and fitting of loom. Usually these specialized jobs are performed by a particular group of people who specifically pierce the vertical threads through the two *ba*¹⁴ in such an alternate manner that helps to formulate the gap or *jhamp* between the vertical threads at the time of weaving. Then each of the threads from the two *ba* are cumulatively pierced as a pair through a single gap within the *sana*¹⁵. Each *sana* contains many such gap, usually varying between 1700 to 1900 in number. A person doing the job has to be very minute at the time of piercing the threads through *ba* and *sana*. Weavers usually help these people in course of doing their routine job. The people doing the job of *ba-sana-gantha* often charge between Rupees 120 to Rupees 150 to complete one such assignment. Generally, the weavers reset their own loom themselves after the completion minute job in *ba-sana-gantha*. There are few occasions where because of the specific requirement of design the weavers seek the advice of specialists.

After all these initial preparatory process the artisans themselves perform the actual job of weaving or *banidari* and produce finished products. In spite of sounding simple the process of weaving involves a complex procedure involving several tiny little implements in a loom. Weavers in Begampur region usually operate with the wooden frame fly shuttle loom. The nature, structure and complexity of loom vary depending upon the nature and sophistication of the produced items. The looms in Begampur area are unlike the pit-looms usually found in other developed handloom waving centres in the district, rather these are the frame-looms with its utility of moving from one certain place to another. The structure of the looms, used in Shirajpur is formed by four vertical poles, each being around 6 feet in height. These wooden frames form a box-shaped structure and are attached with each other by wooden pegs, which are present at the side at around one third of its total height. The circular wooden beams in the front and at the back, each one of which is around 9 feet long, known as *guti* and *pati/naraj* respectively, forms the basic structure of a loom. The back beam actually contains the warped vertical threads those are rolled in terms of design on a particular object. The front beam holds the finished object. Generally as the weavers finish production of a particular section of his product, they wrap the finished item into front beam by pulling the *dan-khil*¹⁶. There are two harnesses or *ba* at the middle portion of the loom hanging at the center with the help of nylon chords. The harness or '*ba*'s are suspended from the top with the help of bamboo or wooden frame. There are three flexible wooden structures or *pakhi*¹⁷, attached

¹⁴In a *ba*, there are several loops formed by glossy threads all of which are arranged in linear manner with the help of two thin bamboo sticks one at the top and at the bottom helps in formation of gap required for basic weaving mechanism.

¹⁵The structure of a *sana* is like a comb, and nearly fifty inch in length. It is prepared from very thin slices of bamboo arranged very close to one another.

¹⁶*Dan-khil* is a local term usually denotes the handle situated at the right side of a weaver.

¹⁷*Pakhi* works like a liver; help in alternative upward and downward movement of the two *ba*'s.

with nylon chords to support the two harnesses at the center. Again these two harnesses are attached to similar chords with the three bamboo paddles or *tal-pa* at the bottom. There is another wooden frame having a rectangular structure that is known as *dokti* hangs in the same level of vertical threads. It has two separate piece of wood, one in each side, those are attached to handle '*hatal*' through nylon threads. There is a specific groove in *dokti* specially designed to direct the shuttle or *maku* through vertical thread. Apart from these, there is specific attachment like a comb called *sana* that helps to tighten the texture of the woven material as the weaver alternatively pull the *dokti* as one horizontal thread passes through the created gap within the vertical threads at the time of weaving. The gap is created because of the specific placement of vertical threads through the two harnesses and *sana*. That means if a particular vertical thread is placed through a hole in a *ba* then in another *ba* it must pass through a gap. It is one of most basic requirement in any weaving mechanism. The weavers in Shirajpur use iron sticks or *dangi* to create specific pattern or design in the border area. Occasionally they create designs in base or *jami* area with this technique. The *dangis* are placed between the vertical thread of border area with the help of iron rods, which are attached to another wooden boxlike which rests at the upper portion of the loom. This is locally known as wooden frame or *dobby*. It is made up of splices of wood: set one after another in a cyclic order. Each wooden splice has several nail attached to it, as these wooden splices revolve then it causes a tension among the chords attached with the wooden sticks at the upper portion of *dobby*. These chords again, because of their connection to the *dangis* placed between the vertical threads around the border area and occasionally in *jami* area, helps formulating different forms of design or pattern. This attachment and its structure vary depending upon formation of design. When the weaver presses the paddle or *tal-pa* it helps creating the gap or *jhanp* within the vertical threads (*tana*) through the tension on chords attached consecutively to *ba*, *pakhi* and *dobby* (designing machine). Then weavers swing the handle in a sidewise manner that helps the fly-shuttle to go through the gap created within the vertical threads. Then the weavers release the pressure with the leg to bring the vertical threads in its previous position. In order to maintain uniformity of texture and to weave the horizontal thread (*poren/ bharna*) neatly the weavers pull *dokti* inside. This is one cycle of weaving that the weavers have to perform repeatedly all day long to produce a single item.

The Raw materials and Products: Mostly all the weavers in Begampur area produce *Shari*, apart from disperse instances of Dhoti and *Ghamcha*. Weavers generally use thick diameter of threads (No. 80)¹⁸ for the base area which is coarser in quality. Besides, a thicker and coarser quality of thread (No. 60) are also used but relatively less in proportion. Threads for the border area are different from base both in terms of texture and quality. The threads, which are used for designing requirements in the border area, are locally known as *paton*. Threads like No.40, polyester, *Jari* and No.2/80 are used for the purpose. These threads in terms of their designing requirement are allocated during the process of production of back beam.

¹⁸The nomenclature of thread follows the rule.

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Process of production involving use of raw material and techniques which plays an important factor in determining the quality and nature of products. Technology and the treatment of product is not by far the best in the area of Begampur in terms of the comparative picture handloom weaving tradition found in the district of Hooghly. The weavers in Shirajpur have persisted with a particular form of technology over two to three generations. The local artisans hardly got the exposure to modern technique like jacquard, usually found in the other developed weaving sector like Shantipur (in the district of Nadia, West Bengal) or Dhaniakhali (in Hooghly district, West Bengal). Begampuri items often contain lesser number of threads as the weavers use relatively higher diameter of thread for productive purposes. The number of vertical threads (*tana*) in Begampuri item vary between 1600 and 1800 in comparison to the range between 1700 and 2000 found at other important centers in the district so the quality of the product are often low in comparison to other developed sectors in the district. The number of vertical threads in a particular item is very much dependent on diameter of thread. Usually the items those are produced with lesser diameter have higher number of thread. It helps those materials to be more neatly woven directly affecting their durability and quality. Begampuri product can be broadly categorized in three segments.

- i. *Mata*; a piece of cloth produced with low quality thread like No.60 and often with no design,
- ii. Medium quality product; produced with relatively lesser diameter of thread and with moderate design at the border area and
- iii. *Kata-naksa*; a piece of cloth produced with a relatively thinner diameter of thread like No. 80 threads and with design at both at boarder and *jami* area. *Kata-naksa* is the highest grade found in the region of Begampur.

Most of the items in the area of Begampur can hardly match up to the products of other major centers in the district like Dhaniakhali, Rajbalhaat, Haripal, Koinkala, Badangunge and Khanakul where weavers use *No.100* threads in comparison to frequent use of higher diameter of threads like *No.80* and *No. 60* in local production unit. The threads not only differ in the diameter but also in their textural quality, which ultimately affect quality of produced object.

The problem of coexisting tradition of power-loom, other than quality of the produced object is another important factor that has aggravated the woes of the local artisans. Figure-1 clearly shows the comparative aspects of the two very similar yet different productive processes. Power-loom like handloom also involves a number of persons in several preparatory activities in a similar way. But the productive processes are different in terms of two most important factors; i) rate of production and ii) monthly output and iii) monthly profit. A person persisting with the handloom gets a monthly profit between Rupees 1500 and Rupees 2000 per loom in comparison to monthly profit ranging from Rupees 8500 to Rupees 9000 against one power-loom.

Fig. 1. Comparative Aspect of the Productive Processes of Handloom and Power-loom

Handloom	Investment	Rate of Production	Monthly output	Monthly Profit
	Raw Thread	(in hour/item)	(in rupees)	(in rupees)
	Warp [<i>tana</i>]- Weft [<i>poren</i>] Border & Design [<i>par-o-paton</i>]	10-15 hours	12000- 13000	1500-2000
	Colouring			
	Preparatory			
	Production of finished fiber <i>Puruni-kara</i> and <i>Naraj-gutano</i> <i>Ba-sana-gantha</i>			
	Electricity			
	Labour charge			
Power-loom	Investment	Rate of Production	Monthly output	Profit
	Raw Thread	(in hour/item)	(in rupees)	(in rupees)
	Warp [<i>tana</i>]- Weft [<i>poren</i>] Border & Design [<i>par-o-paton</i>]	2-3 hours	19000- 20000	8500- 9000
	Colouring			
	Preparatory			
	Production of finished fiber <i>Puruni-kara</i> and <i>Naraj-gutano</i> <i>Ba-sana-gantha</i>			
	Electricity			
	Labour charge			

The product range in a power-loom is not as wide as it is found in handloom products. Naturally the cost of each product is much higher in case of handloom. The important thing is the time and skill required for the two productive processes. Handloom is much different from the power-loom product in this regard. The productive process in power-loom saves a lot of time and manual labor so the power-loom products often present tough competition to the low grade hand made objects. Power-looms, thus, possess an indirect threat to the local artisans, who are engaged with the production of low quality handmade products. In spite of its profitability, the required capital to set up a power-loom unit is an important factor

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in the decision making process. Mostly it is out of the reach of a common artisan. The gradual shift towards profitable power-loom by entrepreneurial class has an effect on the labour force. In Shirajpur power-loom units are replacing the required skills and knowledge associated with handloom industry. Actually it is changing the role of a particular section of population, who earlier used to associate with the traditional production system in a different manner altogether. The entrepreneurial classes like *mahajans* can adjust to this changing scenario. Often they have 20 to 30 separate handlooms working under them. They can cumulatively earn a profit between Rupees 30,000 to Rupees 40,000 per month for these looms. But a common artisan can hardly ensure steady livelihood from his handloom without other capital. Simultaneously, if the power-looms takeup monopoly in cloth production, there will be the immediate problem of un-employment and under employment due to surplus labour.

II. Organization of Production and Network of Distribution

Handloom weaving comprises of several activities associated with a production unit. The production may be observed as a system of interdependent roles which are based on the categories of production, technology and produced objects. In the previous section of technology the article focused on the different activities directly or indirectly linked with the process of production. These varied organizational role in the process of production like; i) entrepreneur: who takes the burden of investment ii) labourer: who engage themselves in several acts either in preparatory activities or in weaving mechanism and iii) distributors: who work as a linkmen between the distant local production unit and the urban market place form the organization. In Sirajpur there are two classes, *mahajan* and master-weaver who perform the role of an entrepreneur. *Mahajans* often play the role of an entrepreneur because of this authority and control over the resources. Even they employ master-weavers to supervise the process of production. The people associated with coloring, production of back beam, and *ba-sana-gantha* and the common artisan weavers form the labor force. A class of person locally known as *pikers* does the job of marketing. Most of the weavers in Shirajpur are still working under the *mahajani* system. There are some disperse instance of weavers getting some assistance from cooperatives. But such efforts and its magnitude is too little to meet the growing requirements of the local weavers. In Sirajpur, *Mahajan*, master-weaver, *Piker* (whole-seller/middlemen) and weaver along with people associated with preparatory activity form the organization of production in a hierarchic form. Figure-2 states about the organizational hierarchy of these classes. Due to the monopoly over the raw material and resources all the involved classes under *mahajani* system lives at the leniency of a *mahajan* except the master-weavers. Because, a master-weaver can manage as they have their own adequate resources to run their production unit independently. But due to scarcity of resource other participatory classes like artisan weavers or persons involved with preparatory activity have to depend directly or indirectly on the will and motives of *mahajans*. *Mahajans* often decide about the terms and condition in an assignment based on the market demand of product. The degree of heavy dependence on part of the weavers is one of the most important drawbacks of *mahajani* system as it pushes the weavers to the state of disempowerment. For a detailed

understanding of structure and functioning rule of organization the roles and relations among these different participating classes are discussed bellow.

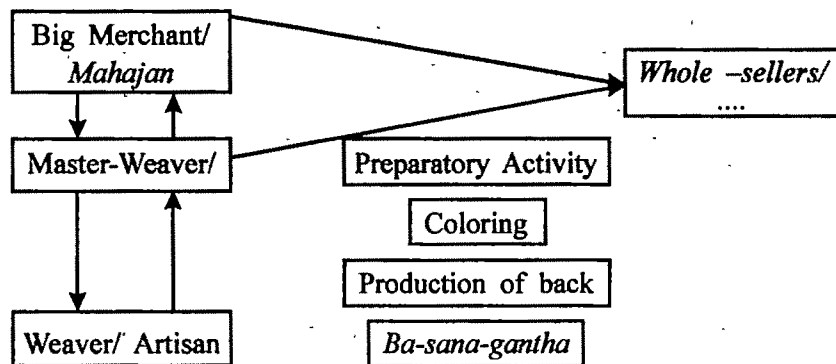


Figure 2: The organizational hierarchy among the participatory role-positions in production system of handloom clothes in Shirajpur

i. *Mahajans*, the entrepreneurial class often invest their money in several stages like buying of raw yarn, coloring of threads, production of finished fiber and preparation of back beam. In Sirajpur *mahajans* have adequate resource to support at least 20-30 independent production units. They spent between Rupees 3500 to Rupees 4000 for buying of raw threads required for a set of production/*Charan* against one loom only. The cumulative amount speaks for itself that how much resource one needs to be an entrepreneur. Similarly they invest in coloring of raw threads because it also requires a lot of money. Thus, depending upon the local informal wage system *Mahajans* either provide the colored threads to the weavers where weavers invest in those stages for themselves or all the costs right from coloring up to the production of back beam is bared by *mahajans*. *Mahajans* meticulously calculate every step of his investment and then determine the labor chare or the cost of the product. *Mahajans* also play a key role in distribution and marketing of those finished items apart from their role in the process of production. There are few *mahajans* who invest in big scale and are not directly associated with the process of production. Rather they run their business from the profits generated by marketing these local products. They employ several specialized personnel to perform the specific jobs for them. Generally these big investors invest through the relatively small entrepreneurial classes like master-weaver who can manage the time to supervise the actual production at ground level.

ii. The main job of a **master-weaver** is to supervise the productive process in their own production units. But often these classes work for other and assist in several other activities also. Master-weavers are also an entrepreneur class but their rate of investment is relatively lesser in comparison to the *mahajans*. Due to their relative lack of recourse these class take raw material in credit from *mahajans* and invest those in to their own production unit which involve 6 to 7 active looms. Master-weavers generally employ those persons, who, depending

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upon the nature of product will take between Rupees 40 to Rupees 85 as labor charge. To return the credit that they have taken either from *mahajans* or from a big investor generally the master-weavers return a particular amount of finished item to these classes. Rest of it they usually sale using their own network of customers. Thus, master-weavers get some amount of profit by selling the products. Although, the level of such profit is not comparable to the class of big investors or *mahajan* but still their position is comparatively better to the other participating classes.

iii. **Pikers / phores (whole-sellers/middlemen)** are not directly involved with process of production rather they play an important role in marketing the products. The main job of a *piker* is to accumulate several type of product from *mahajans* or master weavers and supply them to the outer market. Often these classes work as a subordinate employee under the *mahajan* or a master-weaver. *Pikers* because of their exposure to the outer market often gather a good deal of knowledge about the market requirements. These information are vital as it often help emulating a particular design from outer region. Because of their importance in providing such information about the outer market, the design and the quality of products from other area *pikers /phores* are employed both to market the local product as well as to collect good knowledge about the market requirement and demand of product.

iv. **Tantis (Weavers/artisans)** are the class of laborers and generally performs acts associated with process of weaving. Generally, weavers work under a *mahajan* or a master weaver and get the labor charge between Rupees 45 to Rupees 75 per item only. Due to the lack of resource weavers do not invest in different stages of production like buying of raw threads, coloring or even preparation of back beam. Usually they only bare the cost spent in the production of finished fiber. Often weavers have to take additional money from *mahajans* in their period of crises. This additional support from *mahajans* other than providing daily wage, slowly taking away weavers individual right to speak for their own sake and even their separate identity as a crafts man. Weavers are becoming indebted to a particular *mahajan*, mere workers in the business of cloth production as they can not even leave the contract at their will.

People associated with works like coloring of raw threads, production of back beam and *ba-sana- gantha* also form a part of labour force. These peoples do not work under the informal wage system like a common weaver; rather they work in a relatively independent environment. For example the coloring units often employ several hired personnel to complete a particular assignment. Often these specialized sectors get a work assignment from either *mahajans* or master-weavers. The case of 'production of back-beam' or *ba-sana-gantha* are similar as often these are specialized jobs and these classes get a good amount of work due to their possession of specialized skills. But in spite of their position to negotiate on the labour charge, these classes also have to keep track of the slight alteration of work condition that may affect their chances in profit making and even curtail their work assignments. Because, wages against each allied activity in an area is decided on the basis of rate of production. Thus, these classes often face the problems like lack of the work assignment and low wage ratio if there is a lack of production.

The network of distribution in Begampur region is formed out of both local and occasional clientele in outer areas. Begumpuri products are generally sold in the local markets place like Chanditala, Serampore Dhaniakhali. Generally, *mahajans* and master-weavers in Shirajpur village use their familiarity and network of kindred's to capture both the outer market demands as well as to capitalize on the information regarding the market requirements. The cases show that with the help of close relative the local investors often send their products to the neighboring weaving quarters where the cost of the local product is relatively higher. Begumpuri products often sent to such places to capture the demand for cheap and profitable cloth in other areas. Thus by using it as one of their marketing strategies, often the best quality Begampuri product is pushed with the low grade products from Dhaniakhali. Because, a common buyer can hardly distinguish a Begampuri and a Dhaniakhali product in terms of its woven texture and quality. Apart from these places often the best quality products are marketed in distant urban market place like Howraw-Haat, Barabazar etc. Low grade Begampuri products like *mata shari* or the power loom products have their own section of buyers due to their quality and cheap cost. These products are often sold to the big *mahajans* at local level who sale these to other big investors at regional level who generally after packaging sale these in open market. Begampuri products are produced keeping in mind the specific requirements of particular section of buyers who want attractive clothes at a cheap price. The inferior quality and nature of the produced objects often prompts entrepreneurs to market their product in local area.

III. Continuity and Change: Emerging Issues and Perspectives

Handloom weaving tradition in the area of Begampur is going through a transition. The coexisting tradition of power-loom weaving tradition certainly has affected the decision-making process. The weavers themselves regard weaving industry to be a dying industry as one of the aged weaver puts it

"Peoples association with the weaving industry is gradually reducing over the years...one can hardly see the young peoples presently associated with handloom industry. Situation was different in our times when we took it as an occupation.....if one repeatedly comes within a short interval they can follow this reduction in the peoples association."

Even the entrepreneurs are not seeing any silver lining regarding the present state of the handloom industry. One of the *mahajan* puts it this way-

"The golden day are not likely to come back... there are gains and losses in business, previously we have earned a lot of profit along with the usual evils associated with the trade. There used to be a design once in every ten to fifteen years that used to eradicate all our losses in previous ventures....but it is highly unlikely in the present scenario and we are not expecting either."

Although rate of participation in weaving and its allied activities are quite a large in figures but fact of the matter is how many of these participants are continuing at their will? All the questions regarding the why the weavers are still persisting with the so unprofitable occupation of weaving merge into the common found phrases-

"Due to the lack of availability of other suitable occupation and our long and home grown familiarity with the weaving job prompted us to choose it as an occupation."

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"One can hardly manage to find people who are willingly tend to associate themselves with the weaving industry. Since we have no other way in front we thought to capitalize on the knowledge that we have gained over the generations."

Perhaps this underlying apathy to their familiar craft holds the answer to the question regarding the decline in the number of weaver over the years. The most striking features can be found from the participants both from their age, from their ethos and even from the mundane aspects in daily life. Nearly all the practicing weavers are either in their thirty years or above; only a few of the young people have come to this profession. The general feeling among those is to try out other avenues first. "If nothing happens then their age-old hereditary guild of weaving will be still there", this is one of the main perceptual road-block in course of the development of weaving tradition that was found both from the records and even amongst general peoples ethos. Naturally it has made an effect in local cotton weaving tradition as one of the aged weaver quite markedly puts it,

"people tend to thought, that there probably was a huge 'factory or something' as they every morning saw thousands of people from neighboring areas, like Barui para, Singur and others used to come for work here."

But now hardly any such instance could be found. Although there is considerable proportion of population involved with local weaving tradition without any suitable alternatives, but it certainly has decreased over the years. Production system in the area of Begampur and especially in Shirajpur village is not an organized one, in terms of Governmental role with facilitating agencies like Cooperative System, and also in terms of the way the whole production is carried out by the weavers. Cooperatives in Shirajpur are dysfunctional existence reproducing themselves only in papers over the years in stead of constantly guiding and evaluating the developmental measures. History of cooperative in Begampur area is not pleasant either. Bara-Begampur Samabay Samity was one of the first cooperative and very much successful in its initial days, but due to local politics and some influential *mahajans* it was burnt out. Since then, no other cooperative ever has reached the level of expected success like Bara-Begampur Samabay Samity. The general statement about the cooperative is not pleasant either. Often their out burst comes out in this form-

"There are cooperatives in Sirajpur but only in figures... it is another form of developmental measure that is corrupted, at least in the region of Begampur. Often *mahajans* cumulatively tend to accumulate their product range in the time of audit....they even can manage the officials with their money."

Most of the weavers are working under a *mahajan*; a particular class of entrepreneur who usually invests at buying of threads, coloring it and then in the production of back beam. Nearly all the production systems are under the control of the local *mahajans*. They enjoy the authority, because of their superiority in decision-making. The big investors at the regional level and *mahajans* at local level on the basis of their assessments of market demands select and decide the sectors to invest on, and are in a governing position to determine the ups and downs of production. The area of Begampur is more or less used for the production of cheap cloth aimed at particular section of buyers.

Another important issue is the use of technology and the quality of the product. There is a coexisting tradition of power-loom weaving, which holds the technological superiority and saves both money and time for the entrepreneurs. It has been lucrative means for the investors whose sole objective is to gain profit from the business avenues. With this moderately developed technique the local weavers cannot compete with power looms and mills in rate of production compared to other developed major sectors of the district. Generally the weavers produce two to three items in a week. Power looms in comparison can produce as much as six to eight comparable items a day those are sold at cost of Rupees 150 to Rupees 200 per item. The Begampuri products can not compete with products of Shantipur, Dhaniakhali or Rajbalhaat both in terms of aesthetic dimension and quality. There is a trend to use relatively lower quality of threads like No.80 and the quality of product is often is not in the same leg of Dhaniakhali, Rajbalhat, Santipur. The target population of buyers of the product is much more restricted with its impact on the rate of investment and the level of participation. The level of investment by the local resourceful thus not so high, and as a result the income level of the weavers in the area is low. The cost of the product is not that much that the weavers can get big share from it. After taking his share of profit along with cost of expenditure a *mahajan* gives only the labor charge to the artisans. The Labor charge of the local weavers vary between Rupees 45 to Rupees 75 and which gives them the total income between Rupees 800 to Rupees 1600 depending upon the rate of investment in several preparatory stages of production. Inevitably the technology plays its part in changing perception of both entrepreneurs and the artisans themselves towards investment and production. The level of participation of the female villagers, who previously used to perform the job of preparation of finished fiber have changed. There is a growing trend among the women to participate in the act of weaving as the investors don't consider the job of preparation as a separately payable job. They tend to take it as a part of actual weaving. Thus, the local artisans presently face the problem of finding suitable labour for these preparatory jobs. Usually these jobs were given to the female folks in nearby weaving community. Even they had to pay additional money to person doing it certainly have aggravated their problem. Hence all such unfavourable factors have been demotivating to the weavers of Begampur.

CONCLUSION

Industrialization in India always remained a source of debate amongst the scholars. Naturally the opinion on its effect on the handloom industry is also disputed. It is seen from both perspectives one as having direct distressful effect on the handloom due to the use of capital-intensive technology (Bagchi 1972; Morris 1983), where the due to the superiority of technology the "gains were unequally distributed" and the others advocate that the effect is indirect one, commercialization from below rather from the competition from above have brought the demise (Roy 2002:507). The general conclusion by the Marxist scholars, who labeled the great decline in artisanal industries, especially with the advent of the Europeans in the nineteenth century led the non-Marxist scholars refuting their conclusion. They sowed that there was a decline in industry in colonial times. Indeed, using income data, they argued

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that substituting labour with machinery was an important cause for this (Prasad 2001:281). Improved productivity in both cottage and factory goods led to a decrease in world textile prices, making production in India increasingly uneconomic (Roy 2002.b). The process of decline tends to be seen as “counterpart of increasing capital-intensive technology” (Roy 2002. a: 507). Britain first won over India’s export market and eventually took over much of its domestic market as well.

Present ethnographic attempt to understand the emerging issues and problems as felt by the weavers of local weaving tradition in village Shirajpur in the area of Begampur Hooghly district indicates towards important qualitative factors unlike most of studies based on quantification and econometric method. The production system in Shirajpur is mostly under the control of a particular entrepreneurial class local *mahajan* or the investors at regional level. The entrepreneurial class possesses such power and authority that they can determine the organizational role and responsibility of any common artisan who is more or less in a state of disempowerment. It’s their resource and control over the process and organizational structure of production that enrooted exploitation since the time of Native Court during the days of Mughal. During the that period their ‘supervision’, ‘suppression’ and ‘quality control’ emerged as a blessing for the weavers and handloom weaving tradition later appearing as an irreversible one (Das 2001). To solve the problem of disempowerment and to organize the informal elements of handloom weaving industry the Government has intervened and introduced the cooperative system during the 1970’s. Cooperatives were specifically introduced to provide color, yarn, tools and materials for the weavers to facilitate production. To encourage the weavers there was a bonus on yearly production, leave facility, gifts, but most importantly it gave the artisans an outlet that market their products in a subordinate business organization under state government. West Bengal Small Scale Industries Limited established two marketing centers one at Dhaniakhali in Hooghly district and other at Ranaghat in Nadia district (Mitra 1948: 819). They looked after the interest like collection of raw material, distribution and marketing aspects of small-scale industries. But there is hardly any Cooperative in Shirajpur that is working properly. There is no specific body like cooperative in the village at least in terms of its specified function, which might constantly control and evaluate to take developmental measures accordingly. It’s the distortive system of politics of profit in production kept it alive only in papers. It was repeatedly being shown over the years the cooperatives are active but they certainly are not. It is the class of powerful entrepreneurs that never gave a chance to the cooperative system to flourish in the area of Begampur.

The weavers in village Shirajpur are operating with moderate technology and often lag behind the other developed weaving sectors in the district as well as in the state. This inadequacy in terms of the technology is being maintained without any innovative effort of rescuing the tradition from being exploited by the class of resourceful to run their business with cheap labor used only to produce moderate products directed to certain poorer demand of market. The products of Begampuri tradition cannot match the quality of products from some of developed areas in the district. Even there is a strong competition from the

power-loom that has made inroads into the market of the cheap products. In spite of similarity in the coordination of labour power-loom differs in two most important factors like rate of production and other monthly outcomes in profit. In comparative terms a person persisting with the handloom gets a profit of Rupees 1500 to Rupees 2000 per loom in comparison to Rupees 8500 to Rupees 9000 per power-loom. Most importantly the production unit of the power-loom in having an effect on the labour force by replacing the skills and knowledge required in handloom it is actually changing the role of a particular section of population previously associated with the different production system altogether. With the incorporation of the new technique the 'social coordination of labor' that linked techniques and objects to productive processes¹⁹ might have changed as there is general breakdown of the socio-economic fabric supporting the activity of traditional handloom weaving industry²⁰ and fragmentation of economic life from family to society²¹.

The situation in Begampur indicates towards the indirect effect of industrialization where Roy (2002: 508) mentioned about how many weavers managed to survive the competition from British cloth. Rather the change can be addressed shifting perception of the local people owing to low income level and non profitability of weaving as profession. There is a growing trend among the young male members of weaving families to try out other occupational openings as economically weaving never remained a viable occupation. In terms of the quality of the product, the informal terms and conditions under which an artisan work they generally only get the labor charge that varies between Rupees 45 to Rupees 75. It shows that an artisan weaver can possibly earn about Rupees 1000 to Rupees 1500 monthly. The trend among the women to participate in weaving is also indicative of the low income level is getting the sanction as the acceptable earning of previously low-earning women labour. This adds to the expansion of general gendered exploitation in the informal economy. These situations actually hold all the answers behind the changed perception of local people of Begampur. A *mahajan* with his 20 to 30 separate looms can manage a profit up-to Rupees 30,000 to Rupees 40,000 per month. But a common artisan hardly can afford such situation. The realistically growing fear among the handloom weavers about the power-loom tradition taking over the dominant role in cloth production of that area to cause under/un-employment keeps none to put their next generation into such an industry that is at the brink of eradication. The obvious process of change is a result of conflict not only between two technologies, but also between how they are perceived by market-oriented industrialization, the perceptions of powerful entrepreneurs at both local and wider levels and of the roles of the local weavers, whose woes are least attended by market. On behalf of technology the endeavour of 'flexible labor-intensive technology' to supplement and smoothen the process of change and to look after the interests of artisans at ground level may be testable participatory alternative.

¹⁹see, Dobres 2000; Lerman et al. 2003; Pfaffenberger 1992; Wright 1996a.

²⁰see Niranjana 2001.

²¹see Long 1996.

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Address for correspondence: Arnab Das, Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019. arnab_katha@yahoo.com

VOICES, NOISES AND KOLKATA BOOK FAIR: AN INSIDERS' STUDY OF CONSTRUCTS, PERFORMANCES AND PRACTICES IN A SPACE FOR CONSUMPTION

Suman Nath¹, Arnab Das², Gopalkrishna Chakrabarti³
Anwita Dutta⁴ and Priyadareshini Sengupta⁵

Abstract: Kolkata Book fair (*boimela*) is said to be the World's largest and most attended international non-trade book fair. It is also Asia's largest book fair and World's third highest annual conglomeration of books. The organizers, booksellers, publishers, booklovers, intellectual elites, book buyers, artists, performers of mass media and different other participants principally belonging to city life share their mutual interests in the same time and space producing a big business. The present effort is an outcome of authors' participatory experiences of book fair supported by through observation, semi-structured, structured and focused interviews, conversations with other participants that centered on the questions of culture in the urban Bengali cultural space and beyond. The paper projects the engagements of the participants in improvising, producing and re-producing the rituals of entertainments, either as a campaign of products and ideas and / or as public consumption ending in itself. In addition, the available elements for public consumption are not exclusively the books, their variedly designed pavilions, and the associated images of cultural production rather a variety of consumption practices of foodstuffs, other lived performances like, songs, music, painting, making portraits, art works, recitation, slogans, group performance, lectures on urgent issues and launching of new books, and selling own artistic performances. Interaction of the field observers with the participants for gathering the data from the people across age groups, genders, and socio-economic positions resulted in documentation of their sustainable modes of ritualistic and innovative consumptions in the space of the book fair. The much-debated event of the change of fair's place, though affects, but does simultaneously alter the material-cum-symbolic construction of the cultural space of the fair. This ultimately sustains people's attachments and satisfies the intended interests of the participants. In sum, the paper explores peoples' participation, perception, celebration and reinforcement of identity as reflected in their modes of ritualistic and innovative consumption of this customary and yet exceptionally renewable space of culture called *Boimela*.

Keywords: Ethnography, Urban Anthropology, Fair, Book, Space, India.

INTRODUCTION

"Habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy-nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning" ~ (Bourdieu 1977, 78 and 79)

¹Assistant Professor (WBES), Dept. of Anthropology, Haldia Govt. College, West Bengal

²Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta. Kolkata

³Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta. Kolkata

⁴Research Scholar, Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, Research Associate in Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi.,

⁵Lecturer (in Senior Scale), Department of Anthropology, Bangabasi College. Kolkata

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Kolkata book fair has become one of the largest non-trade fairs of the world in last 33 years (The Telegraph 2008a). Each year the Publisher and Booksellers' guild (the organizer) arranges for approximately 800 stalls, ranging in size from 200 sq. ft. to 1200 sq. ft. and two to three giant pavilions where debates, discussions take place. Separate space is allotted for items other than books like a variety of foodstuffs, people and their performances including art works, music and dance, etc. The present paper is an outcome of authors' experiences at the book fair supported by stray conversation and semi-structured interview with people including stall holders, organizers, buyers, hawkers and other participants. Broadly the paper intends to unravel the cultural constructs of the Kolkata Book fair as a space and argues that possible consumer consumes not only the economic aspects offered but also the space in total. More specifically the paper addresses a three fold issue. First, a somewhat detailed study of ritualized presentation of material aspect within the fair including the intended and unintended aspects is done. Second it aims at understanding people's constructs, stereotypes and sense of place. Finally it projects people's modes of consumption of the space.

MARKET: A SPACE OF RELATIONAL AND CULTURAL ARTICULATION

From the perspectives of buying, selling and advertising book fair means business. The Book fair used to take place at the Kolkata *maidan*, at the heart of the city, not very far from major railway stations, bus terminuses, and metro station. In 2007, on environmental ground the High Court compelled organisers to change the place, a result of long struggle between the environmental activists and the organisers.

The sentiments and movements associated with the book fair's change of location from Kolkata *maidan* to Yuba Bharati Stadium and then finally to *Milan Mela* ground as a result of court's order (The Telegraph 2007) give book fair an added dimension, something which is lost when we fail to recognize people's attachments with the space. The present position agrees with Swedberg (1994), who rightly observed Market as a social phenomenon in its own right and it is resulted by recurrent and patterned interactions between agents. However, his idea of 'exchange in competition' as something should be the primary interest of market analysis excluding everything else as secondary is something the present paper opposes. The paper argues for the importance of 'extraeconomic' aspect (Storr 2008) that constructs a social space within market.

Several social scientists writing from interpretative, interactionist perspectives argue that construction of world or culture building is an ongoing public discourse (Richardson 2003). If we accept that people's response to the object depends on what those objects mean to them and that meaning of those objects arises out of the negotiated experience of social interaction (Blumer 1969) then we are to accept that people's construction of objects depends on the same negotiated social interaction. Therefore, human world including the material and interaction components constructed intersubjectively. With our ability to construct objects, we can fix our (intersubjective) experience (Ricoeur 1979) much in the manner Berger and Luckman (1967) argued for the objectification of subjective experience. From here, we argue that the material world is constructed with often repeated patterns so that human beings find

meaning out of it. It may be used in Goffman's sense (1967) with reference to 'interaction ritual'. The material world incorporates various ritualised codes to achieve a shared reality. The material world is therefore can be viewed as an outcome of a shared construction from which again a shared meaning is constructed which has a capacity to modify the material world by innovating and incorporating newer codes. This modified material world then again participates in the same process of meaning making as mentioned. Therefore, it is a continuous process of meaning making but follows certain objectively ritualised patterns, which are situational.

BEING-IN-THE FAIR: COMMON VOICES AND NOISES

In January 2000, the first author accepted when he was offered to handle one of the stalls at Kolkata Book fair. Authors had been visiting the book fair much earlier than 2000. However, with this opportunity first author was able to get a closer view to the fair.

The intended aspects: Inside scenario of the book fair is not affected by the change in the location. It houses the same number of stalls with size reduction. The stallholders adjust accordingly. There are three categories of stalls smallest: 200 Sq.ft., medium: 400 Sq.ft., large: 1200 Sq.ft. The stalls are square in shape, with tables and book racks made temporarily for book display. A lottery system is followed for stall allotment. These are arranged in a cluster keeping a space minimum of 10 meters between every cluster. Decoration and lightening of stalls depend on individual stallholders. The participants range from international publishers to nationally famous and least known publishers. A few stalls bring old, rare and second-hand books, where people bargain. Otherwise a 10 percent discount on every purchase is given—a much lesser than what one gets at regular market. There are heavily decorated stalls, with thousands of books arranged in a subject wise division. Uniformed attendants, inbuilt music system, air conditioned environment and expensive lightening system give these stalls a plaza touch. These are always the case with internationally famous publishers. Their stalls are made attractive with glow signboards containing the international bestseller's cover page, smiling faces of authors, colourful walls and decorative flower tubs. There are other stalls with lesser decoration where books are displayed on ordinary tables, with a few attendants, and a few tube lights. However, in every stall there is seriousness in arranging books. Books are kept in such a manner so that each of them gets attention to the possible buyers. Many of them use some of the spare cover pages as collage on the outer wall of their stalls—used as aesthetic information. A separate place for the little magazines is kept. These are called 'tables'. A large open place within the fair premise contains many tables for the display of little magazines. Everyday the table holders bring their books and carries them back when the fair gets over as there is no place to store their books.

The unintended aspects:

"Book fair had its intention to bring together numerous publishers together, providing a space for display of different books to the readers, where they can go through pages and can have an idea about them. This becomes a space, which is normally neither available, not imaginable, thus gorgeous plenitude of anywhere",

told one of the publishers participating in the fair for last thirty years. From our experiences at

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book fair, we are unable to relate the said intention with the present appearance of the fair. There is a separate space for arranging the temporary constructions of the food sellers; the foodstuffs contain heavy foods like fried rice, chicken, and mutton, a variety of snacks like potato chips, *chanachur*, and *samosa*, drinks like soft drinks, coffee, tea, desserts like sweets and ice creams. In sort, book fair contains a sample of city's food habit.

Yet another separate space is allotted for the artists and for people who like to sit and spend some time with related others. One can make his or her portrait by an artist who will charge only Rs. 20/-. They sale their art works, and make artistic items on the fair ground. It is a space to see real people doing real works. While entering their space one may hear a guitar and a male or female voice accompanied by small hand held drums. A dramatic voice of recitation by the writer of the poem s/he is reciting. They have their groups, and inquisitive people surrounding them. Within the fair premise, there are groups of young college student chitchatting, cheering. Elders are discussing, and smoking. Family groups are eating some home made food from tiffin boxes. One may see a much known artist, a common face in television or silver screen. People find these bonuses (remember extraeconomic), which are by no means lesser than the valued and precious intention.

The spaces and the interactions: The preparation for the fair starts at least one month early, where one finds a rapid transformation of an open space into organized, temporary stalls. In a cool December, it all starts with coming and going of old tata trucks and new and swift piaggio minidoors filled with temporary construction materials. The workers quickly starts organizing their activities and the work continue even at night. They make temporary shelter at the construction site. By the day of opening, they transform the place into a catchy fair ground. Commercial artists start their work by writing and painting images and stall numbers on the outer walls of the stalls. Decorative trees on the tubs are also made available so that stallholders can purchase for decorating their stalls, the personal space within the fair ground.

Gradually, the fair opens at 12:00 in the noon and crowd start gathering during the afternoon and evening. People after completing their office duties, students after college hours come in groups or individually and gather at the fair ground. The overall crowd and the tempo of the fair quicken as the weekend approaches and during the Saturday and Sunday it reaches at peak. At the entrances, there are ticket counters with long queues and several men stands with leaflets containing advertisements of recently released books. At important entrances, sales men and women stand with books. They asks *"excuse me sir, we are giving this book in 40 percent discount! Please have a look, you won't get it in the fair!"* Most of them get immediate attention. Whenever a group comes with their tickets in hand, the group of sales personnel competes to get the first attention. They are selling the same books. While entering in the fair ground one is already having several leaflets. Within the fair, the environment is filled with music and announcements in Bengali, Hindi and English: "did you lost your companion? Please come at the guild office and you will find him or her standing for you, we cannot announce for individual names excepting children and elderly!" with a bengali song as the background music the announcement continues "have you got the cash memo of the book you bought? You may have to show them at the gate!" Close to each

entrance, there is a map of the book fair, a copy is also available free of cost from the office. There is a little gathering of people looking at it and many carries a copy with them.

At the book stalls there are people looking at the books with curiosity, browsing through pages and purchasing. There are stalls where the cashier is busy with computer and still others where the attendants are chitchatting, waiting for potential buyers.

By the evening, especially during the weekends, every corner of the fair ground is filled with people, international publishers like Penguin, Cambridge, Oxford and Bengali publications like Ananda, Dey's, Mitra O Ghosh, Vishva Bharati have a long queue waiting out side the stall. At pavilions, heated debates take place; a queue of interested people out side those pavilions is already formed. There are people with bags filled with books, trying to find a space to take rest beside a coffee counter or a restaurant. The coffee counters and restaurants also have queues.

At the noontime, the space allotted for the artists is filled with people with their artworks, busily organizing themselves within their place. At one corner a man is already making a portrait of a girl whose parents are looking at the page with a smile. At another corner, a young boy has started singing "I am leaving on a jet plane" and he immediately gets attention. Gradually all of them start their performances, drawing, painting, and singing.

At the food court, a young boy shouts "patties, patties, patties! Rs. 10/- each" a few products have been sold quickly. The snacks corner is rearranging their displays, the restaurant is dealing with the dust by applying water, the ice cream and coffee corner is already making their sale. Beside the coffee corner, two boys are smoking and drinking coffee, a police officer says, "smoking is prohibited!" they smile and toss their heads and throw the cigarette ends.

As the evening comes, a couple is whispering with smile on their face while eating a double-scooped ice cream under a tree close to artists' corner. The girl has a packet containing books lying just left of her. The artists' corner is busy with visitors. One of them is bargaining with an artist for his artwork. A hand held drum now accompanies the guitar boy and a group of others singing in chorus a much known contemporary Bengali song.

At one of the popular book stalls, already having a long queue outside, people are busily searching for their books, creating a noise of enquiry for their desired one, though air-conditioned, its hot inside and the heat it self is a topic of discussion "come on we will come tomorrow, I just can't tolerate this environment any more!" but the intended listener just heard it without commenting and continues to look at the book. From the cash counter a young cashier shouts for the balance with the name of the book and an old man replies "yes! yes! Here I am!" At a stall written "old and rare books available" people are searching and looking into old, termite eaten, yellowish books. At the cash counter, a man is bargaining "No, hundred is too much for this ruined book! I can't afford more than fifty for this!" At last, they are settled in seventy and the man pays.

The empty space between stalls is not empty by the evening. Authors find themselves a space within and starts observing. At the right side a famous singer is sitting with a few related others. They are discussing, and occasionally laughing. After a while he starts singing and many of the others joined him. A woman starts dancing with the tune of a folk song.

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At left side, there is an ice cream corner and the sales men are busy with providing different flavours and counting money. Surrounding the corner people are sitting in groups most of which are formed in a circular manner. They are talking, sharing foods, ice creams, looking into each other's purchase and enjoying the togetherness. A few flying hawkers, though ought to be banned make their appearance with spicy snacks mixture, tea, coffee, cheap toys and obviously with cheap books.

Under a lamppost close to a coffee corner, a man is selling his mathematical calendar, capable of telling dates for next five thousand years. He is busily explaining the mathematics behind the calendar. He makes a quick sale. Just beside his calendars, another boy is selling funny books he shouts "Rupees 10 each!" he is also getting a good attention from the passers by. A bearded and tall man appears with a bundle of books in hand. He is a regular participant of the book fair and the authors are observing him since they are participating in the fair. He sales books that creates laughter he says "you will buy my books in rupees two, read them for twenty minutes and will laugh for one hour!" Same dialogue he is reciting for many years, though the content of his book keep on changing.

At the British council, in an air conditioned environment people are more conscious about their surrounding. A man just before entering to the stall was talking in Bengali is now transformed himself. He is now clearly enquiring about the procedure of becoming a member of the BBC library in English with a woman appears a Bengali too with her vermilion in forehead, a custom of Hindu married women. In the BBC 'environment' every one as appears are quite conscious of being in the presence of others. The same is true in case of Oxford and Cambridge stalls. At Star mark, a posh bookstore from Kolkata, also holds stalls at the fair, the first author was bound to speak in English as the attendance starts answering his Bengali question in English. The first author feels his presence as "being onstage" (Goffman 1959).

CONSTRUCTS AND STEREOTYPES: CONSPICUOUS VOICES AND NOISES

Authors agree with Rodman's (2003) argument that place ought not to be considered as unproblematic and simply the locality where people do things. It is rather politicised, culturally relative, historically specific local and multiple constructions. Place therefore is as complex as voice. In this section, the authors intend to project people's mental constructs associated with the place called book fair.

The emotions with the location: In 2002, the Kolkata High Court notice informed participants and organizers that book fair at its place was temporary matter: from next year book fair would have to find a new place. Some environmental activists have objected on the ground that the book fair is polluting the Kolkata *maidan*, the place then used as fair ground (The Telegraph 2007). Many of the participants have thought the notice itself as a 'temporary matter'; organizer would find a way to cope with the situation. The notice however, prevailed but it took real effect in 2007 as the organizers had to remove the semi prepared stalls from *maidan* to the Youba Bharati stadium, though not far from main city but the place lacked facilities like metro railway communication, proximity to the major railway and roadway terminus, hundreds of bus routes that the *maidan* had.

A demand of returning the book fair to its 'original' place, the place where it belongs became a hotly debated topic. A sentiment touched people from all spheres and social positions. People spanning from renowned writers, politicians, to book lovers and regular or occasional participants projected their voices by signature collection, organizing rallies, publicly arranging festival of book reading and writing events at *maidan*. Environmental activists filed a case against these initiatives in *maidan* too (The telegraph 2008b). A show of emotional attachment with book fair and its place was everywhere in the city. The court however was strong with its notice and for the second time in 2008, the fair took place in the stadium, and dates had to defer for almost one month. The sentiment took such a height that famous personalities including the Chief Minister held a symbolic book fair in the city's town hall (IBN live 2008). However, the court's decision remained unchanged that changed the name of the fair; it was no longer '*Kolkata Book Fair*' rather it became '*Boimela 2008*'. For organizers the identity of Kolkata book fair is associated with *maidan*, with change in place it has lost its identity.¹ However, in 2009, the fair takes place to *Milon mela*, the permanent fair ground constructed by the Government and is said to be the permanent place for book fair to be organised each year. The major problem is the shortage of space and communication. Book fair at *maidan* enjoys 28 acres whereas *Milon mela* has a space of 5 acres (The Telegraph 2008c).

It is heard that the new book fair while adjusting itself within a smaller place will amputate components like space for artists, discussion halls and the food court.

"I can not think of a book fair by excluding them (the artists). Book fair means each and every aspects being included! I am certainly not going to make a visit this fair. This fair is nothing in compare to the book fair we know!"

(A professor from IIM Calcutta)

However, ultimately the artists are provided with the space they need. There are multiple reactions with the change of place. Their attachment with the place called book fair and its association with the *maidan*. With little probing people reflects several issues to oppose the change of place: first, the functional importance of *maidan*, as it is very close to the major bus, train and metro route so that they can make frequent visit and could stay at the fair ground late; second, sentiments and nostalgia of *maidan*, the proximity with Victoria memorial a monument that symbolises Kolkata. With the shift in space, the fair lost its identity too. The symbolic value addition is prominently depicted as in 2008 the name "Kolkata Book fair" is changed to become "*boimela*" deleting the prefix "Kolkata."

Good, Bad and In-between: the economic criteria of places inside: Booksellers have their stereotypes of location and place allotment. The change of place according to many booksellers has adversely affected their sale.

"...the usual number of visitors was more or less same, but they are not buyers. As the new place is very close to salt lake township, most of the visitors are from the township and are just visitors, doing their evening walks not purchasing books."

(Owner of an age-old Bengali publication)

¹Broadcasted in Star Ananda, (A Bengali news channel) on 25th February 2008, <http://www.starananda.com>

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Interactions and long term participation in the book fair resulted in the discovery of stereotypes and beliefs with the time and place of the book fair and potential turnover. Commonly the booksellers believe that more holidays during book fair leads to better sale. However, this is not true with well known publications. They have type specific books with 'target buyers.' Their sale remains more or less same irrespective of time and space.

The spatial dimension is two fold. First, they consider space as a whole, i.e. the location of the fair as determinant of turnover. Out of 500 stalls interacted in 2009, 478 stallholders admitted the fact that location directly affects their sale. The publishers with 'target buyers' are not exception. Second, booksellers consider the location of their stall within the fair ground as another major factor for sale. According to location they classify the space into good space and bad space. However, this locational factor does not affect famous publishers.

"We don't feel our sale depends on the place of our stall, because we have books that if you need you have to search us! Secondly we decorate our stall in such a way it gets prominence"

(Senior sales executive, Penguin India)

Following is the categorical classification of good place and bad place as identified by booksellers who recognise location as important factor for their turnover.

Following tables (1&2) represent classification of good place and bad place.

Table 1. Classification of good place and reasons sited.

Good place	Reasons
A stall placed at the corner of a cluster.	Prominence.
A stall at the front side, with an open space.	Attractive.
A stall at the beginning of the lane.	Better visibility.
A stall straight opposite to the entrance.	Immediate and fresh attention.
Stalls of similar books together.	"Push sale" chances better.

Table 2. Classification of bad place and reasons sited.

Bad place	Reasons
A stall located at the middle of the other stalls within a cluster.	Poor visibility, hard to find.
A stall at the back side near the boundary.	Poorest visibility, frequently overlooked.
A stall at the end of a side lane.	Often ignored as buyers are already exhausted with other stalls
A stall very far/near from an entrance.	Frequently overlooked.
A least popular stall very close to other popular stalls.	Never gets attention.
A Bengali stall surrounded by or near to English stalls, or vice versa.	Poor attention.
Stalls near open stage and artists corner or food corner.	Crowded but potential buyers are much less, greater chance of theft.

When stall holders end up in a real bad place, they usually take immediate action by advertising. Usually they use wall near ticket counter, gates, lamp posts and even public urinals to popularise. The advertisement is brief and states name of few books, and stall numbers. Rarely they increase the discount and arranges for gifts. However, there is unclear category of in-between. Usually these are stalls which do not fit the criteria of good or bad. These stalls usually fall in a middle range of prominence and visibility.

Flying hawkers have even more complex division of space. They first divide the categories of things they aim to sell. Then according to category they divide the fair ground in to several compartments. If the number of hawker increases the entrance of each of them is restricted to both time and space. For example if there are five tea sellers, they will divide the ground in to five sections and each of them should not cross their own section. However, if the number is more, say if it is 20, then they must do their business in specific times. However, as the sale depends on the time (in the evening tea sell increases manifold than the noon time for example), they use a rotational system. Since, flying hawkers are officially banned; they often end in getting themselves arrested. Whenever one hawker enters within the territory of another conflict arises. Often this ends with temporary arrest of the both.

The extra-economic spatial constructs of the participants: One of the key questions of our enquiry was to see why the place book fair is so important for the people. We find many of the visitors do not buy books from the fair. There are principally two reasons for this. First, the books are available with greater discounts at other places. Second, they simply do not have the money to buy their desired copy. For this purpose, we made a two-step sampling. At first, based on our experiences at the fair we make categories of people who visit the fair. Second, we randomly interacted with people falling in different categories to enquire their interests. Following is a table which represents categories of people and their purpose of visit.

Table 3. Categories of people and their purposes of visit to the book fair.

Categories of people	Purposes
Serious readers	Search books otherwise unavailable in the city.
Book lovers with money	Purchases whatever attracts them.
Intellectual elites	Usually invited to participate in discussions and debates, rarely purchases.
Students and job seekers	Meeting place, looks for books, and make selective purchase.
Casual visitors	Loves the ambience.
Old and retired	Less purchase more of an enjoyment.
Artists	To canvas their art work, make portraits for money.
Film personalities, and renounced artists	Participate in discussion, often come for book release.
Ministers	Book release, participation in discussion, attendance to party stalls.
Media persons	For media coverage.

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The table 3 represents agreed purposes of the categories of people interacted. The free flowing conversation with participants has yielded more refined and subjective constructs and attachment with the place. These subjective constructs portrays people's perception of being-in-the-fair. Following is the refined subjective attachment of the people with fair.

1. A space to **search for books** that are not usually available in the city. A space where one can spend hours with books, can go through different books, can **read** them and subsequently may buy them if they wish to.
2. At book fair, one brings children so as to make them **socialize with books**. Many people with children strongly argued for this. They wanted their children to become a book lover, *"at book fair the books come alive to the children, who are too busy with their videogames and television programmes"* as told by a headmistress of a kindergarten school. She had her son and students at the fair ground.
3. *"To know what's new in the world of books you need to attend the book fair. However, with internet, one can gather information but that is nothing in comparison to the fair. Books are alive here. People are so lively, more importantly you smell the new books"* told by a housewife. Book fair seen by many as a place to **gather information about books**.
4. *"Just can't think of starting a year without book fair, I need to buy my foods for this year... I know there are places where you might find books at cheaper rate but buying them from fair gives me a pleasure. I save money for this occasion."* Voice of a research scholar. This and in many other occasions it is found that people feel a **sense of belonging** with the fair.
5. *"Book fair is for fun. No books for me please... and I don't have money either... (smile) I love this environment, I love spending time with friends, playing guitar, smoking, I love being frenzy... books is for him (locating one of his friends)... Book fair is not only for books"* an art college student. It is a space for **making friends, meeting friends, chitchatting, singing and dancing, spending some personal moments with partner, reunion**. This is in fact, enhances the sense of belonging with the fair itself. As one of the famous writers in Bengali said, *"that country and culture is great where lovers spend time at book fair rather than at park or disco"*². Book fair means a whole that includes intended aspects i.e. books and unintended aspects like foods, space for artists, the smell of book, the noise, the announcements, the dust, smiling faces, and open space for people to seat, talk, share, sing and dance. The parts in together means a sense of space which is in every dimension larger than the book fair in restricted sense.

The social space at the book fair is therefore can be viewed both as a *locale* (Agnew and Duncan 1989b) where particular activities occur but as the study suggests from people's sense of place it is something more than locale; it is a socially constructed intersubjectively shared

²Sunil Gangopadhyay as told to Ananda Bazar Patrika (Bengali) on 28th January 2007.

world. People find meaning out of the material being and the interaction components which in totality makes the being-in-the-fair experience meaningful. The change in location shaken its identity to a great extent, however, internally constructed world remained the same. The material codes and presentations remained the same, people found the same being-in-the-fair. The meaning construction is possible even with the change in place because within the fair the world building consist the same codes that creates meaning and people found consumable.

The commodification: Evidently, there is local identity and micro level categorization of the space. The transformation and created ambience where people voluntarily participate becomes a commodity which people consume. The strictly economic categories and scarcity of good place and good time shows the direct commodification of time and space. However, the extraeconomic categorisation of people's emotional attachments with place lead to the commodification of the entire culture attached with the fair.

The evidential consumption: People's sense of space as evident in their attachment with book fair also establishes their reflexive relationship with the place. Book fair as an active place of construction of material world enriched by actions of multiple agents in intended and unintended consequences people's consumption of the whole is notable. Putting it in Marcus's (1989) terms the consumption has a complex connection within a system of place. It is people's identification of themselves with the known arrangements and codes that people find meaningful over years. The attachment in this way sustains as the meaningful codes are identified by people and material aspect of the fair matches with people's constructs. When someone enters in the book fair, s/he is immediately exchanging a part of his life and internalising the place. If we accept that consumers' can freely choose between commodities on the grounds of the use-value then the question is why book fair is relevant to the participants if the intended consumables (books) are high priced? While viewing this aspect from the consumers' position they are radically free to make choice. As they choose to purchase books at high price from the fair. We wish to mention Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) as they say in late capitalism use value is brought within the control of the capitalist producers by means of power of advertising and the mass media. Book fair from this perspective occupies an unique position by controlling the use value. The organizers and stall holders are able to present material world in such a way that it creates meaning, and a sense of attachment to the consumers. Even when there is a change in location, the material world is constructed in such a way that the continuous process of world building among the consumers in terms of their sense of attachment and the social value associated with book lovers sustains. People's sense of attachment and the multiple constructions with the place itself becomes a consumable commodity. Book fair in this sense shows a culmination of intersubjective meaning construction out of the material world of the fair ground. The constructed codes are objectively related to the material world of fair that ultimately gives fair its identity and pulls consumers. In other words this material world and the interaction component attract people and inspire them to exchange their time or labour with the fair. As each of the stallholders accept the fact that the fair as a whole gives them a boost in sale for the next year, it strongly supports the argument.

The intention of controlling people's use value is satisfied, and on the other hand, the use value of the fair to the other participants is an illusion, which ultimately satisfies the market

CONCLUSION

Though not essential, but it is helpful to rejoice the experience with certain oft-repeatable abstract images of thoughts. First, there are ways by which this inter-subjectively alterable meaning of the material space can be read and subsequently fragmented and multiple pictures can be discovered. Second, there are ritualised and often repeated codes with which people identify themselves with the material space. In so far as these rituals are performed appropriately, people find meaning and participate within. In book fair as people find the codes meaningful they get their satisfactory use value simply by being-in-the-fair and participating in this active construction. Third, there are symbols and local concepts of space. It is complex, multifaceted and sometime intertwined with other dimensions most prominently with time. Finally, people are radically free to make choices and to create their own meaning out of anything here. Peoples' sense of space, feeling, and emotional attachments with the place show a sense of cultural consumption, which shows an apparent un-relatedness to the capitalistic intention of the book fair. More substantively, these apparent unintended aspects are intertwined with intended aspects, because without them book fair loses its identity. People find meaning out of the fair with its form, including the intended and non-intended aspects. These meanings positively contribute to the commercial value of the fair. Yet, it may fall back to the undesirable limit of the book-sellers, if the tastes of grandeur, often beyond the exchange capacity of commerce, do not touch the indefinitely growing lovers of *boimela*.

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Address of correspondence: Suman Nath, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Haldia Govt. College, West Bengal Email : snsuman21@yahoo.com

A STUDY ON POTATO FARMING AND PROBLEMS OF A SECTION OF THE POTATO FARMERS IN WEST BENGAL

Arun Makal^a and Arnab Das^b

Abstract: The ethnographic study on the potato farming with respect to the knowledge, practices and problems among the potato farmers of Khanakul region, a fertile Gangetic plain in West Bengal began on 2008, the International Year of the Potato (IYP). It is attuned to the recent agricultural anthropological research with farmers' knowledge and farmers' local procedures. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of local potato farming activities, associated with their concepts and perceptions of the existing problems in potato farming. Potato cultivation is mostly rotated with rice cultivation there. The account given below is based on Rapid Rural Appraisal of integrating knowledge, concepts, and categories of potato farmers, especially of small and marginal farmers. The fieldwork of six months was conducted at six villages in the Khanakul region, which is known for local potato cultivation. It used multiple ethnographic methods such as observation, group discussion, interviews to find out the felt problems and expectations of solutions for more profitable productivity of potato in the face of growing competition and decline of local production in Khanakul region.

Keywords: Potato, Farming, Agriculture, IYP.

INTRODUCTION

In declaring 2008 the International Year of the Potato (IYP), the UN General Assembly seeks to focus world attention on the role the potato can play in defeating hunger and poverty. The General Assembly has asked FAO to facilitate IYP implementation, in collaboration with governments, UN agencies, CGIAR centres and NGOs. The idea for declaring the international year came from Peru's Permanent Representative to FAO. According to FAO "in terms of sheer quantity harvested, the humble potato tuber is, in fact, the world's No. 4 food crop—after maize, wheat and rice—with production in 2005 of more than 323 million tonnes. For the top 10 producing countries, which account for two-thirds of global potato output (India being at the third position), the total value of the crop was estimated at some \$40 billion."¹ Salaman's account (1949) of potato's origins, domestication, worldwide diffusion, and political fate in European life is the first substantial focus on the theme of potato as food. Europeans were directly responsible for the introduction of potatoes into North America, where they were well established by the eighteenth century. In addition, potatoes accompanied colonists to India, to French Indochina (CIP 1984). Since the 1970s, the greatest rate of increase has been in the warm, humid, subtropical lowlands of Asia, where potatoes are planted as a dry-season intercrop with rice or wheat (Vander Zaag 1984). Ethnographies started to mention the

^aSenior Research Fellow, UGC, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^bSelection Grade Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Calcutta

¹see <http://www.fao.org/ag/magazine/0611sp1.htm>

midaltitude regions that grow modern varieties intensively, tend also to devote small areas to older varieties that farmers maintain to meet ritual, symbolic, or preferential local food needs (Rhoades 1984; Brush 1992).

Recent agricultural anthropological work is focused on farmers' knowledge (van der Ploeg 1993; Fairhead 1990; Salas 1992) and Farmer First approach (Gupta 1989; Chambers *et al.* 1989). Farmers have an intimately operative knowledge of their local environment, of the problems, priorities, and criteria for evaluation issues regarding farming. They are actively engaged in experimentation as a part of their farming routine (Chambers *et al.* 1989; Rhoades and Bebbington 1995, Sumberg and Okali 1997). Anthropology plays a significant role in strengthening farmers' voices in negotiating definitions and implementation of sustainable agricultural development (Cleveland 1994). Agricultural anthropology is also associated with the farmer's local procedures (Sillitoe, 1998). Understanding the conditions the study of farmers' knowledge, decision-making and epistemology (Sillitoe 1998; Scoones and Thompson 1994) are important in agricultural anthropology. Netting (1974) recognized there is a positive correlation between the farmers' knowledge and sustainability of their farming systems. Farmers' decision making depends on the underlying assumptions that are made about cognition, i.e. the thought process itself (Gladwin 1983). Sillitoe's (1998) comments suggest, in sub-Saharan Africa, local knowledge guides the decisions and practices of small-scale farmers who represent 70–90 percent of agricultural producers and more than 60 percent of the population. Schneider (1995) studied the farmers' practices and sweet potato diversity in highland New Guinea. Anthropologist Robert Rhoades describes potato farmer's needs and realities (Rhoades 1984). Thus farmer is the central person in crop production and farming. He is the planner and executor of any farm activity, and performs all functions involved in food crop production including clearing, planting, weeding, staking and training of vines, fertilizer application, harvesting, processing, storage and marketing (ILACO 1985) and decisions regarding all. With this background of understanding the present study provides an overview of local potato farming with the focus on the small and marginal farmers, who are facing severe challenges in sustaining potato production.

THE STUDY

The present study has tried to explore

- i. Knowledge and practices as well as processes of the potato farmers of the Khanakul region of the district Hooghly in the Indian province of West Bengal;
- ii. Farmers' operative concepts, categories, perceptions, attitudes in potato farming with focus on
- iii. Small and marginal Farmers' needs and problems in reproducing the cash crop, most of the time along with rice/paddy.

The study of the Potato farmers in the Khanakul region, Hooghly, West Bengal has used Rural Appraisal (Chambers, 1994; Mascarenhas *et al.*, 1991; Devavaram *et al.*, 1991; Cornwall, 1992; Jonfa *et al.*, 1992; Mosse, 1992) of integrating knowledge, concepts, and categories. In the

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context of participatory research and development, the first author with the role of observer as participant had consultation with farmers about their environment, knowledge, farming practices, own experiments, insiders' classification, responses to diffusion, communication, analysis of the situated problems.

The ethnography selected two panchayats in the Khanakul-II block of the Hooghly district in the state of West Bengal where all the local farmers as principal means of earning grow potato, traditionally associated with rice cultivation. The multistage sampling technique was adopted in designing the study. In the first stage, the Hooghly District in Indian state of West Bengal purposively selected based on the highest area under selected crop of potato. In the second stage, two gram panchayats viz., Kalashpai-I and Kalashpai-II² in Khanakul-II block of Hooghly district were selected as it is actually the highest area under potato cultivation in the concerned district. In the third stage, from each village like Kayatpur, Hairabpur and Chak-Kayatpur of the gram panchayat Kalashpai-II and Kalashpai, Chanpanagori and Chakmagori³ of the gram panchayat Kalashpai-I, six to ten small and marginal farmers, who grow potato, were selected purposively. Snowball technique was used to identify as locally significant potato growers in different villages. Further, while selecting the villages in the selected block for identifying the potentiality as well as concentration of potato growers, experience of the potato farmers were taken by consultation. The reference period of investigation relates to the year 2007-2008. This study combines observation with focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews, all qualitative research methods according to the need of situation.

POTATO FARMING IN WEST BENGAL AND THE AREA UNDER STUDY

Potato is presently the only economic cash crop available for both local and export markets. Potato is grown almost in all states of India. In India, more than 80 per cent of the potato crop is raised in the winter season (Rabi) under assured irrigation from October to March. With significant improvements in irrigation facilities and the seed varieties, potatoes are being cultivated in almost all parts of the country. Its cultivation is more concentrated in the Gangetic plain comprising Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Punjab account for about 86 percent of India's production. (Brar 1977; Bhullar 1974; Bhardwaj 1985; Dhingra, 1978; Srivastava 1980). The state of West Bengal also produces about 28 per cent of the total potatoes grown in the country. Potato production in West Bengal is concentrated in Midnapore, Hooghly, and Burdwan districts (Directorate of Agriculture 1996). A description of agriculture practices in Hooghly for the period 1850-1910 notes a high demand for potato and widespread cultivation in Hooghly and Burdwan districts (Kelly, 1981). Potato growers from the major potato growing areas in the southern part of West Bengal like Hooghly, Burdwan and Midnapore districts are not interested in the Bhutanese varieties, except for *Kufri zoti*. The seeds from Punjab are main source for Hooghly, Burdwan and Midnapore (Roder, Nidup and Wangdi 2007).

²The real names of the blocks were not used over the ethical issue.

³The real names of the villages were not used over the ethical issue.

The studied gram panchayats like Kalashpai-I, Kalashpai-II are situated at the Rural area under Khanakul-II block in Arambagh subdivision of Hooghly district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Khanakul police station serves this block. Headquarters of this block is in Khanakul. The area lies between the Dwarakeswar and Mundeswari rivers and is prone to floods. In particular, the gram panchayat Polashpai-I consists of six villages Mostafapur, Kalashpai, Barbaon, Chanpanagori, Kotashia, Chakmagori. On the other hand, the gram panchayat Polashpai-II consists of six villages such as Kayatpur, Hairabpur, Parkolahar, Chak-Kayatpur, Khuniyachak, and Narendrapur. These villages are situated on the bank of the Mundeshwari River. This river is called by the local people as *hur-hurer khal*. The economic life of all the villagers in both panchayats revolved around cultivation. The crops produced are mainly paddy, potato and nut. Potato cultivation is the strongest agricultural practices in all the villages. Many varieties of potato are grown in the fields of all the villages. On the other hand, a variety of green vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, turnip, raddish, mustard, chilli are also grown by the farmers of the villages Kayatpur, Hairabpur, Chak-Kayatpur, Kalashpai, Chanpanagori and Chakmagori. The present exploration concentrated on these areas. The period of the study was 2007-08. Every family in the studied villages like Kayatpur, Hairabpur, Chak-Kayatpur, Kalashpai, Chanpanagori and Chakmagori possesses a field for cultivation. Every family works in their fields daily to cultivate and harvest various crops and vegetables. The farmers say that they totally depend on their cultivation. There are two types of fields. The first type is an inherited field, cultivated by the family for many generations. Second, there are modern fields. These farmers cultivate *aaloo* (potato), *badam* (ground nut), *teel* (sesame), *dhaan* (paddy) and different green vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, turnip, raddish, mustard, chili etc. The fieldwork focused on the farmers of the villages Kalashpai and Chanpanagori and Chakmagori of the panchayat Kalashpai-I and Kayatpur, Hairabpur and Chak-Kayatpur of the panchayat Kalashpai-II. The details of population and economic aspect of the two villages namely Kalashpai of the panchayat Kalashpai-I and Kayatpur of the panchayat Kalashpai-II are given below.

Kalashpai Village

The village Kalashpai is populated by different caste like Mahishya, Rajbanshi, Kayastha, Jele, Bagdi, Pode, and Kolu castes. The total number of families of the village Kayatpur is 973. The total population of the community is 5760. There are 2878 males and 2882 females and the percentages are 49.96 and 50.03 respectively. Among the total population 69.73 percent are non working persons and 30.26 are working persons. Among the total non working population 30.96 percent are males and 69.03 percent are females. Among the total working population 93.74 percent are males and 6.08 percent are females. It is seen that 56.77 percent male persons among the total male population are in the category of working population. On the other hand, 3.67 percent female persons among the total female population are in the category of working population. Among the total working population 27.02 percent persons are owner cultivator and 24.15 percent are share cropper, 20.48 percent are agricultural labor. Approximately, they all are belonging from male population. Of the total earning population,

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10.61 percent persons are engaged with zari embroidery, 2.86 percent persons are engaged with making bamboo craft and 14.85 percent persons are engaged with fishing activities. So, it found from the analysis that approximately 71.65 percent people of the village depend on agricultural activities. The farmers of the village Kalashpai cultivate three crops rotationally in year like paddy, potato and nut. Farmers state that Kalashpai is suitable region for paddy cultivation. As a result the farmers of this village mainly depend on paddy but they earn extra income from the cultivation of potato and nut. In the village 31.05 percent are paddy farmers, 25.67 percent are potato farmers and 21.86 percent are nut farmers among the total farmers. On the other hand, 21.41 percent farmers of the total farmers of the village practice mixed farming. In case of mixed farming, farmers cultivate nut with sesame, mustard and other green vegetables like tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, chili etc.

Kayatpur Village

The village Kayatpur is populated by different caste like Mahishya, Rajbanshi, Kayastha, Jele, Bagdi, Pode, and Kolu castes. The total number of families of the village Kayatpur is 1389. The total population of the community is 6999. There are 3429 males and 3570 females and the percentages are 48.99 and 51.01 respectively. The total number of children belonging to the age group (0-4) and (5-9) is 1343 and the percentage is 19.18. Among the total number of children, 654 are males and 689 are females and the percentages are 48.69 and 51.30 respectively. Among the total population 41.32 percent are non working persons. Among the total non working population 19.08 percent are males and 80.91 percent are females. On the other hand, among the total non-working population 39.52 percent are children belonging to the age group (0-9). Among the total population 58.67 percent are working persons. Among the total working population 70.05 percent are males and 29.94 percent are females. It is seen that 83.90 per cent male persons among the total male population are in the category of working population. On the other hand, 34.45 percent female persons among the total female population are in the category of working population. Among the total working population 19.11 percent persons are owner cultivator and 21.23 percent are share cropper, 13.01 percent are day labor, 16.82 percent are agricultural labor. It is also significant that 0.70 percent persons of the total working population are service holder. Of the total earning population, 15.36 percent persons are engaged with zari embroidery, 1.33 percent persons are engaged with grocery and 12.41 percent persons are engaged with fishing activities. The farmers of the village Kayatpur cultivate three crops rotationally in a year. This rotational crop farming is locally called by the farmer as *robi fashal*. The farmers call potato as *sither fashal* (crop of the winter season), groundnut as *goromer fashal* (crop of the summer season), and paddy as *Barshar fashal* (crop of the rainy season). Farmers state that Kayatpur is situated beside the Mundeswari River and is suitable region for potato and nut cultivation. As a result, the farmers of this village mainly depend on potato and nut. Farmers also said that the flood of every year destroys their paddy. As a result, they are less interested in paddy cultivation. Apart from cropping, farmers also obtain their food and income through livestock such as goats, chickens, and ducks. Other activities include fishing, selling of local fuel, handcraft and

provision of labor to others. In the village 16.23 percent are paddy farmers, 31.68 percent are potato farmers and 27.09 percent are nut farmers among the total farmers. On the other hand, 24.98 percent farmers of the total farmers of the village practice mixed farming.

FARMERS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES IN KHANAKUL REGION

The most important crops in Khanakul, based on cultivation area, are potato, paddy, oil-seed and nut. Of these potato and nut are the most important. Potato is one of the widely grown agricultural crops for cash income. The age of the potato producers interviewed was between 20 and 70 years. Slightly 95% of the producers are younger than 50 years. Most of the farmers interviewed have no formal education. They had not attended any extension courses even. The farmers' objective in growing potato is to earn cash and at times to consume them domestically. Farmer's local knowledge was elicited from repeated, focused and detailed interviews. Interviews were completely open with the objective to obtain all the ideas, perceptions and knowledge that farmers have. Following are the main attitude and practices of potato cultivation in the Khanakul region, Hooghly, West Bengal.

- (a) **Categories of potato:** The farmers of the Khanakul region call potato as *sither fashal* (crop of the winter season). The farmers of the villages like Kayatpur, Hairabpur, Chak-Kayatpur, Kalashpai, Chanpanagori and Chakmagori of the Khanakul region cultivate various types of potatoes, principally, *zoti*, *chondro-mukhi*, *pokhraj*, *super-six*, *super-seven*, and *chambal*. The *zoti* kind of potato is classified by the local farmers into three types like *fata-zoti*, *kubri-zoti* and *pepsi-zoti*. According to local farmers the pepsi cold drink company gives the seed of *pepsi-zoti* to the farmers.
- (b) **Sequence of farming practices:** According to the farmers, at the first step of potato cultivation, the soil of the land is specially prepared for sowing.
 - (i) The sandy-loam soil is needed for potato cultivation. The soil is made more congenial with the help of irrigation, locally called as *sinch*, before cultivation. Seven to nine *sinches* are usually required for potato cultivation here. Sometimes, when the soil of the land is in better condition (*tana-jomi*), fertilizer is applied before irrigation.
 - (ii) Afterwards ploughing begins. Some farmers use animal traction to plough their fields. Tractors are also used because, according to the farmers, conditions are unfavorable for cattle keeping. Tillage is done manually using hoes in the land near the river.
 - (iii) After preparing the soil, the land is divided into different portions, which are called by the local farmers as *parti*. Between two *partis*, one waterway is made for passing water that is called by the farmers as *jol-nala*. In one *parti*, rows of the land with a distance of 18 inches are prepared. The rows are locally known as *dara*. This distance sometimes may be of 21 inches to 22 inches. The *dara* is somewhat higher than the land. So, one gutter is prepared between the two *dara*. The seed of potato are sowed on the *dara* and the potato plant grows on the *dara*. The length of *dara* depends on the length of the land. The distance between one potato plant to another on the *dara* is locally known as *Poe*.

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(iv) The sowing of the potato seed generally starts in the period from the second week on the month of *karttik* (October-November) to the first week of *poush* (December-January) month. About two bags of seed potato are required for the cultivation of one *bigha* plot. The current rate of two bags seed potato is two thousand rupees. The farmers of the Khanakul region use one special kind of seed potato locally known as *ekchit*. Two to three years ago, they used their own preserved potatoes of previous year's produce as seed potato. The current rate of one bag *ekchit* potato varies from 1600 rupees to 1800 rupees. A bag of *ekchit* potato carries 50 kgs seed potato.

(v) The collection of potato starts from the month of *magh* (January-February) and ends in the month of *falgun* (February-March). The potatoes, which are harvested in the month of *magh* (January-February), are known by the local farmers as *kancha aaloo*. On the other hand, the potatoes, which are harvested in the month of *aghrayion* (November-December), are called by the local farmers as *paka aaloo*. These potatoes are preserved by the farmers in cold storage.

(vi) Various kinds of chemical and bio-fertilizers are used for the potato cultivation like *DAP*, *Potash*, *Euria*. About two bags *DAP*, one bag *potash*, 35 kgs to 40 kgs *euria* are required for one *bigha* main plot. Bio-fertilizers principally include cow dung manure (*gobor sar*) and *khol*.

- (c) **Environment of production:** Farmers report that the potato cultivation also depends on the weather. The medium cold or winter season is important for potato cultivation. But the (i) biting winter, (ii) fog, (iii) hot weather and (iv) rain are harmful for potato cultivation.
- (d) **Labor:** The labor used in all the villages is both domestic and hired. Every member of the household works in the fields. Women and children mostly do the time-consuming operations such as weeding, harvesting, and fetching water. The wives of the potato farmers are also engaged with watching and collecting potato. At times both men and women are engaged with this cultivation as a labor. The wage of the labor for one day presently varies from sixty rupees to sixty-five rupees.
- (e) **Productivity:** According to the farmers that 40 quintal potatoes are produced in one *bigha* land. The production varies from 32 quintal to 40 quintal and the production may be lowered only to 10 quintal per *bigha* of land. Farmers opine that there was much production of potato in two to three years back. The increase of production was due to their own preserved potatoes of previous year as seed potatoes. The problem of the present decline of potatoes emerged due to the unavailability of proper storage of produced potato.
- (f) **Diseases, insects and pests:** Different kinds of diseases are seen on the potato plants. The local farmers call these diseases in different names like *dhosa rog*, *fata rog*, *choke mora* etc. According to farmers the leaves of potato plant are drowsy due to *dhosa rog*. The *dhosa rog* is also called by the local farmers as *jolti dhosa*. The Khanakul farmers

mention that the potato with *chok mora* kind of disease, usually identified with sort of adhesive fluid on the surface, is not suitable for boil. The potato farmers use various kinds of medicines and vitamins for the growth of potato plant like *dithen M-45*. About 500 gms. *Dithen* are required for one *bigha* plot. They use different others medicines like *taxofive*, *metacid* etc. to protect the plant from fog. Different kinds of vitamins are also used by the farmers for the growth of production of potato like *milakhora*, *mankojeb*, *aminos*, *multips*. The production of potato and the growth of the plants are also increased due to the use of *multips* vitamin.

- (g) **Market and networks of distribution:** According to the potato farmers, the price of potato depends on the market. The local businessmen buy the potato directly from the farms and supply to the big businessmen. The farmers of the Kayatpur village in Khanakul get 110 rupees per bag for selling the *zoti*, *fata zoti*, *pokhraj* types of potato, 170 rupees per bag for *chandromukhi* kind of potato. One potato bag carries 50 kgs potato. Many businessmen of Kolkata (i.e. from Natin bazaar, Barabazar,) Howrah (i.e. from Haro-gobind, Dasnagar) and Hoogly (i.e. from Chanpadanga) come to the Khanakul for buying potato. According to the farmers of Khanakul approximately 75 percent of potatoes are directly bought from the farmers' fields. They have a village level local union, which buys the potatoes and supplies to the big businessmen. There are 20 to 30 members in a union. It is known from the local businessmen (also called *mahajan*) of Muchighat, Kalashpai, that the produced potato of the villages like Kayatpur, Hairabpur, Chak-Kayatpur, Kalashpai, Chanpanagori and Chakmagori of the Khanakul region are exported to distant parts of this country and abroad.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN POTATO FARMING

The problems in potato farming are arranged here according to the perception of the farmers.

- a. **Dependence on monsoon:** Apart from nearly one third of the farmers either having land just beside the river-canal or the capital to invest for machines/pumps to provide water from the canals, the majority farmers of the Khanakul region depend mostly on monsoon to sow their potato crop every year. There are great fluctuations in the monsoon rainfall. Drought and flood are the two major climatic threats in this region. Farmers suggest that the production of potato is decreasing years due to disordered weather.
- b. **Productivity of soil:** Soil problems are perceived as the second major one by more than half of the farmers with small land holdings. The sharp decline in productivity of potatoes by half a decade in the soil, which was previously excellent for potato farming is hard for the farmers to explain and to overcome. Recently the small farmers could only assume some problems with the soil. But there is no provision for testing the soil available to them. According to one aged farmer, "*About 100 bags of potato were produced from the one bigha land just one year ago. Now, only 20 to 40 bags potatoes are produced from the one bigha land*".

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- c. **Small land holdings:** There marginal and small farmers in the study region having less than one hectare of land have now been suffering from regular inter-generational fragmentation of land. The small size of land has become uneconomic. Due to small landholdings many farmers do not follow a systematic crop rotation. Small plots and lower entrepreneurial capacity limit the opportunities for mechanized production as well. In other words, a large number of farmers sometimes cannot produce surplus potatoes beyond self-consumption.
- d. **Problems of diseases, pests and plant protection:** Farmers report that there is no prevention research of diseases for potato cultivation. On the other hand, fluctuating weather causes advent of a number of diseases. The farmers of different villages of the Khanakul region separately confirm that the recent principal disease *jolti dosha* causes too much distress to small and marginal farmers. In case of plant protection, farmers perceive the reasons of lack of control of disease and pests effectively in lack of better pesticides, unavailable bio-pesticides, lack of method of bio-control and high cost of pesticides. Though pesticides are used like *firudon*, *fored* and *ostadi liquid* are used against the common pests (like *ghur ghure poka*, *gorgore poka* etc.) “the plant infections and pests are the major and unpredictable threats for us, the farmers, even the problems vary from me to another farmer”. Farmers use different medicines to protect the potato and to protect the potato plants from the fog like *youthen*, *indofil-m-45*, and *maxol-72*. They also use different other medicines to protect the potato plant from the *jolti dosha* kind of disease. But farmers report that these medicines do not function properly. As a result the current production of potato is decreased.
- e. **Storage problems:** Most of the poorer farmers use the traditional techniques to preserve the produced potato like small thatched hut made by mud and straws. This type of store is useful for one to two month only. Farmers said that after two months potatoes are started to decompose in this traditional way. As a result farmers like to store their potatoes in the cold storage. But there is no good cold storage near the village. Farmers of the studied villages keep their potato in the cold store of Muchighata, 5 km east from the village Kayatpur and 3 km west from the village Kalashpai. Sometimes the attitude and behavior of the proprietor of the cold store are very rude and they do not preserve potatoes of the farmers properly. These proprietors collect different price from the farmers of the same villages. In this way farmers face various storage problems. Previously farmers used their preserved seed potato for cultivation. But for the last few years they do not use their preserved seed potato for cultivation due to these kinds of problems.
- f. **Low market price:** In battling with competing market, the fall of production and inability to use of their own preserved potato seeds both the profit and production of potato are both downsized. Poorer farmers do not take out their produce readily after production in expectation that prices will further go up.

- g. **Fertilizer problems:** Recognizing the widespread availability of the chemical fertilizer, the farmers have been confronting problems such as availability of substandard fertilizers, high cost of better fertilizers. The higher and unstable price of fertilizers, ignorance of farmers about the application of fertilizer, lack of suitably combined fertilizers and fertilizer crisis.
- h. **Increasing wage of labour:** The labor requires for operating various activities such as sowing, ploughing, watching and carrying etc. According to poorer farmers the increasing wage of the labor leads them to the scarcity of necessary input of wage labour.
- i. **Poor infrastructures:** Poor road for transportation and non-availability of transporting facilities to move the potato produce from farmer's fields to the markets and scarcity of proper facilities for storage, processing that disfavor gainful potato cultivation by the small, marginal and even the majority of middle farmers.
- j. **Credit problems:** Crop failure and low returns causes farmer to take credit from various money lenders (*mahjans*). Most of small and marginal farmers have long been heavily indebted and thus they cannot afford modern technological inputs, which are very costly. They badly need credit facilities from the banks, which they don't have.
- k. **Lack of information:** All the middle, small and marginal farmers identify that they heavily suffer from the lack of specialized informational inputs relating to potato production, quality and standard of potato export, export market, price information, etc. The lack of properly updated information about remedies and lack of specialized knowledge regarding aspects of potato cultivation, preservation or storage and marketing they are much worried about the future of potato farming.

CONCLUSION

Farmers of the Khanakul region farm potato for supplementary benefit. They sell a large amount of potato to the businessmen and consume domestically only a little quantity of it. Presently, potato farmers, especially the marginal and small farmers constituting the majority are confused and troubled by the fluctuating market and also the variable weather. Most of farmers don't have enough information about the pests and medicines. This indicates the clear need for extension and training either as individuals or groups for improvement of potato farming. Therefore, field visits for those farmers should be the base for extension activities. Presently the expenditure of potato farming is increasing and the profit is decreasing due to the higher and unstable price of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other inputs of competing productivity. Therefore, the farmers' decisions to use suitable seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and facing scarcity of storage facilities show that lack of capital or credit is the main constraint of potato farmers. This keeps rate of application of fertilizer and other agricultural inputs very low and the potential of available potato varieties is not attained. From the findings of the study, it is imperative to call for attention from government, policy makers, and planners to design effective policy and strategy that would ensure to overcome the problems faced by the farmers. So, for increasing the productivity of potato, this region deserves full attention of the scientists, extension personnel, planners and policy makers of the country.

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Address for correspondence: Arun Makal, Senior Research Fellow, UGC, Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, Email: arunmakal@gmail.com

RELIGION AMONG THE HOS OF WEST SINGHBHUM, JHARKHAND: A STUDY ON CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Sovan Chakraborty¹, and Abhijit Ghosal²

Abstract: Religion is a way of life based on the belief system about the ultimate power. The term 'tribal religion' is used in the generic sense as it encompasses all known religions and religious phenomena over time and space and to provide a conceptual frame to understand diversities in a total perspectives. Tribal religion changes adapting to the dynamics of change-either external or internal or both. These changes can be reflected through a change in form or in both. This paper focuses on the Hos of West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand covering six villages located in different locations and who are exposed to external influences for quite sometimes. So this paper highlights the changes in their religious beliefs (because of Hindu influences through interaction) and accommodates Hindu festivals, practices and worship of deities' overtime. Though the tribals, have been able to maintain their identity through rituals and practices.

Keywords: Religion, Belief, Ho, Bonga, Syncretism.

INTRODUCTION

Religious beliefs and practices are the universal features of human society. But the beliefs and behaviours are diverse in all dimensions of the society. Max Muller (1889), 'the founder of the comparative religion' formulated that cults and myths are based on poetic personification of natural objects. He held the view that religion sprang from the primitives' emotional reaction to natural phenomena that evoked wonder, awe and fear in human mind. Spencer (1876), Tylor (1871) and Frazer (1922) took an intellectualist approach to religion and interpreted it as a means of explaining events by attributing them to divine interpretation. They attributed its origin to people's attempt to explain aspects of the world around them. Today, the term 'religion' connotes a fairly separate department of life and distinct institution, but to the tribes religion is an essential part of his hunting, agriculture, science or art (Friess and Schneider, 1960: 12). Yinger (1957) defines religion as a functional dimension. He holds that religion is a "system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life.

It is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in face of frustration to allow hostility to tear apart ones human association" (Yinger, 1969:9). The most influential definition of religion is that of Clifford Geertz: "A religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivation in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1966:4)."

The term 'tribal religion' is used in a general sense to include all religious traditions

¹ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta.

²Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Subarnarekha Mahavidyalaya, Gopiballavpur

of known tribes world over. Each tribe has its own religion but when religions of different tribes were compared, these religions form a set of overlapping religions and each individual tribe's religion being a sub-set of it. Many scholars from various disciplines have attempted at theorising the origin and evolution of religions on the bases of their studies of different tribal communities in the world. Religion cannot be defined in one way, but it is not altogether impossible to define religion as a generic concept. "The moral....is not that religion cannot be defined, but that it can be defined, with greater or lesser success in more than fifty ways" (Smith,1998:282). It was observed in many studies that in one religious worship, ancestral worship is predominant while among the others it could be shamanism. In India among the tribes shamans, magicians, witch doctor provided a measure of social control in the life of the people. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) study of the Azande society in Africa has revealed the constructive part played by oracles in diagnosing the witchcraft and also providing guidance to remove it from the individual's life. Elsewhere, curing sickness, appeasing the angry spirits etc. are taken up magicians, shamans or medicine man. But the real fact is that supernatural beliefs are the main forms of all religions. So, the term 'tribal religion' is used to include all known phenomenon over time and space and to provide a conceptual frame to understand diversities in a holistic framework.

Religion is a dynamic concept and no religion exists in absolute term over time and space. This dynamic aspect of religion is explained by change and continuity with reference to the religious syncretism and diachronic and synchronic descriptions. Saussure had used the terms 'diachronic' and 'synchronic' to explain the mutability and immutability of language by studying it as it changes through time and studying it at a moment in time (Holdcroft, 1991:69-87). Religious syncretism is used as an explanatory category and a description of phenomena. Religious syncretism refers to a situation where religious miscegenation is believed to have taken place. This condition in itself is a product of diachronic factors. Hence, a religious syncretism in itself is a state that reflects both change and continuity. (Behera,2000:17).

In course of time, the tribal people came in contact with the other heterogeneous population. Their traditional life style changed because of changed social milieu due to acculturation and cultural diffusion. Due to their close association with the Hindus and other religious groups they have adopted some of the foreign cultural traits and religious faiths and rituals practised by their Hindu brethren. Studies show that changes take place in the socio-cultural life of the tribal people was due to industrialization, spread of Christianity and urbanization. Baruah (2000) in her work highlights the changes in religious beliefs and practices among the Kharias due to the Hindu influence culminated through regular interaction and Christian influences through the missionaries activity. Some earlier works done by Chatterjee and Das (1927) shows that the assimilation of tribal culture (the Ho) with the nearby alien culture by adopting and worshipping their alien goddesses. Majumdar (1950) shows in his study that most of the deities worshipped by the Hos during their festivals are borrowed from the neighbouring Hindus. Dhan (1961), Misra (1987), Midya (1996) shows the interpretation of changes in the Ho religion due to some external processes. The study of tribal religion in the changing milieu

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is very significant for exploring the problems and prospects of the socio-cultural life among the tribal groups.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF STUDY

The purpose of this study, firstly, is to identify the Ho religious pattern, traditional belief system and practices. Secondly, to study the change and continuity of religion among Ho and to identify the major influencing factors responsible such changes. Thirdly, to observe how they have been maintaining their participation in the two fold religious belief system. The traditional religion of the Ho has accommodated Hindu festivals, practices and worshipping of the Hindu deities. The change in the religious substratum shows some dominance over the traditional religious practices of the Ho tribe. In order to get relevant data, various methods have been adopted. Primary data have been collected through structured schedules with both open and closed ended questions. Interviews and group discussions were conducted for gathering data regarding their traditional knowledge. Data on belief of the past and present have also been collected. A major part of this research is based on observation. For the purpose of the study six villages were chosen in three different areas one is located near urban centres, second one is near the semi urban areas and third one is in the forest village. In this context it is an important point to note that for identification and interpretation of the changes within the Ho religion specially diachronic approaches.

STUDY AREA AND THE PEOPLE

The present study has been conducted in the West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand State. Jharkhand is one of the states in India which is largely dominated by the tribals. Jharkhand has remained a home to a number of tribal communities since time immemorial. The present study was conducted on the Ho tribe which is one of the major Scheduled Tribe of Jharkhand State having a population of 10.5% (Census, 2001) and distributed mainly in the districts of West Singhbhum, Seraikella-Kharsawan, East Singhbhum etc. and living in urban, rural and forest areas. On the basis of field work covering six villages located in different situation, near urban area, away from urban area and in remote forest situation an attempt has been made to study the nature and change of religion of the Ho. For this study field work has been carried out in six villages of Chaibasa and Khuntapani Block. The villages where study was carried out are Dumbisai and Patahatu (urban area-I), Lupungutu, Guira and Chota Khunta (semi urban area-II) and Rangamati (forest area-III). All of these villages are mainly inhabited by the Ho people while other neighbouring non-tribal communities are *Gope* (Gowla), *Tanti* (weaver), *Lohar* (iron smith) and *Nag*.

The Ho populated areas are known as *Kolhan* area and they are known as *Kolarian* tribe. Ho dialect belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language (Prasad: 1961: 1). In the 2001 census, 91 percent of the Ho have declared that they belong to 'other religions and persuasions'. They follow the 'Sarna' religion. This means that they did not declare themselves to belong to any of the major religious groups and follow their own religious systems. Their traditional village panchayat and *Pir* (consists of 15-20 villages) still exist in the studied areas. Hence, the smallest

political unit of the Ho is the village panchayat, consisting of village headman called *Munda*, village messenger called *Dakua*, and some village elders. Each *Pir* under a territorial chief is known as *Manki*. The *Manki* is responsible to settle all types of inter-village disputes. Their religious ceremonies, villages festivals and sacred performance are conducted by a traditional village priest called *Deuri*.

CONCEPT OF SARNA AND BONGA

The Ho place of worship is known as *Jaherthan* which is nothing but a sacred grove, consisted of a set of *Sal* (*Sorea robusta*) trees. This *Jaherthan* is usually located at the outskirts of a village. Describing *Sarna* religion, Roy (1918:1) mentions that it is an organized system of spirits set on a background of vague animism, which institutionally recognizes the deities and ancestral spirits. The Ho believes in a number of gods and goddesses as well as some benevolent and malevolent spirits who reside in and around the hills, forests, agricultural lands and their village premises. They also worship their *Bura* and *Buri* (ancestral spirits) inside their *ading* (kitchen). The Ho calls all their deities and spirits as *Bonga* who are shapeless. These *Bongas* reside in the house, village, forest and even on the mountain. Thus, *Bonga* is the generic term, which is used to signify power and spirit. While describing about the *Bongas* of Ho, Majumdar (1950) has mentioned that "the word *Bonga* is a generic name, and is applied indiscriminately to refer to gods and spirits. The real meaning of *Bonga* is a power, a force, and the religion of the Ho may be called *Bongaism*". Majumdar (1950) shows that there are two classes of agents which bring affliction down upon the Hos. The malevolent *Bongas* most of whom are really gods of alien people and the witches and sorcerers who are usually members of the tribe but take delight in wicked activities. The Hos believe that all diseases are caused by one or other of the following agencies viz. natural causes; human agency (witches and sorcerers) and supernatural agency (spirits and malevolent beings) (Majumdar, 1950). Some of the important *Bongas* of the Ho are *Marangbonga*, *Singhbonga*, and *Dessauli*. The religious head of the Ho is known as *Deuri*. He works as a priest and officiates in all of the village or community level worships. The sources of diseases, illness, drought and any other calamity, etc. appear to him through dream because, he is not able to know about the role of a *Bonga* directly in his day-to-day life, but he gets to know about them only through dream. The Ho worships these *Bongas* during different festivals as well as at the each mode of their life cycle rituals. They used to sacrifice fowls and goats on each of their festivals.

FESTIVALS PERFORMED BY THE HO PEOPLE

Festival is closely associated with the human culture. To rid of from their monotonous life, man celebrates various festivals in different periods which are associated to their day to day activities. According to the traditional sense, the days or period for a joyful celebration is known as festival. This is basically associated with the agricultural, religious and socio-cultural activities (Mohanty 1997). Most of the *Parab* (festival) are associated with their agricultural activities which fall within their agricultural cycle i.e. from the sowing to harvesting. Through festivals,

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they worship the different deities for the protection and increment of their agricultural production. The main festivals (*parab*) of the Ho are *Maghe Parab*, *Ba Parab*, *Hero Parab*, *Jomnawa* etc. and they celebrate these festivals with full of enthusiasm. All these festivals were associated with agriculture activities. Out of these *Maghe* was the main festival among the Ho people. The traditional festivals of the Ho are discussed below:

Maghe Parab

Maghe parab was the main festival celebrated by the Ho. There was no fixed date for this festival but generally it started in the mid of January up to April. It was celebrated in different times in different villages. It was celebrated after harvesting of crops and also for the welfare of the villagers. The date was usually fixed at a joint meeting of the *deuri* (village priest), the *munda* (village headman) and elderly members of the village. *Gram siri*, *Singbonga*, *Budhipat* and other deities were propitiated for the prosperity of the village. The festival was continued for six days and invariably followed by drinking rice beer (*hanria* or *illi*) and dancing which facilitates the youth choosing marital partners. The rites were observed first at the village level and then domestic level in every household. *Deuri* propitiates the supreme god (*Singbonga*), mother earth (*Nage era*) commonly on all occasions in addition to the concerned departmental of presiding deity of a specific rites. According to the nature of celebration each day of the festival named differently which are discussed below:

1. **Gowmara:** This is the first day of *maghe parab*. In southern part of Kolhan this day was celebrated first and then followed by *ote illi* but in other areas it come first and followed by *gawmara*. On the very day they worship their ancestor for the betterment of cattle. On the first day of the festival no communal worship was performed excepting that every household offers *pooja* to the ancestral spirits. The house was cleaned with cow dung mixed water. Rice beer (*hanria* or *illi*) was prepared for this purpose and ceremonial offering of rice, curry and rice beer was made to the spirit.

2. **Ote illi:** On the second day of festival they celebrate *ote illi* which means they worship mother earth by offering her *illi* (rice beer) so that every year good crop may grow on the same soil without destroying the fertility of the soil. Thus, second day was the offering of *illi* to the *bongas* of the village. Every household head assembles at the residence of the *deuri* with a pot of rice beer. After the formal offering of rice beer was made to the *bongas* the villagers drink rice beer as much as they can singing and dancing.

3. **Guri Parab:** In this day the Ho cleans their courtyards, houses and plaster the walls with cow dung solution. They also sprinkle cow dung water over all of their granaries, utensils and implements. So it is the day of purification. The *deuri* or his assistant cleans the *jaherthan* (the sacred grove located outside the village). Later on they spend their time on drinking, singing and dancing.

4. **Marang Parab:** The fourth day marks the real ritual part of the festival. A *pandal* was specially erected for the purpose outside the village near *jaherthan*. *Deuri* along with the villagers come to the *pandal* around the mid noon. The villagers bring a big pot of rice

beer with them. The *deuri* scatters sun dried rice. It was regarded as auspicious if the chickens swallow dried rice. The festival opened with sacrifice of chicken (*sim*) to *Desauli bonga*, the village deity whose aid was invoked during the epidemics of small pox, cholera and also for brings down rain. The three fowls of which a cock of red colour and two hens, one red colour and other black were sacrificed to him. At the same time some flowers of the *palash* tree (*Butea frondosa*), bread made of rice flour and *sesamum* seeds were also offered. *Jahira burhi* the wife of *Desauli bonga* was also worshiped along with her husband during *maghe parab*. She was said to have possessed no power to confer any boon of mankind except that when she was pleased she could plead with her husband for her worshipers. The sacrifice and offerings were made by the village priest or if not, by any elderly member of the village who know the necessary legendary lore. He prayed to the deity that during the coming year they and their children might be preserved from all misfortunes and sickness and they might have seasonable rain and good crop. At this period an evil spirit was supposed to invade the locality and get rid of men, women and children went round in procession through every part of the village with sticks in their hand as if beating the stick on ground, singing a wild chant and vociferating violently till felt assured that the evil spirit fled away. Actually this festival permits a great deal of sexual laxity to the boys and girls and the jumble of words sang by the 'Hos' were indicative of the sexual act. The dance of the *maghe* festival was a quick one, a very joyous, frisky, harum-scarum scamper of boys and girls through the village and there from one village to another.

5. *Maghe basi* or *Maghe moroe*: After the main day of *maghe* feast, it was the day when the Ho celebrates the return of all invited *bongas*. They offer cooked food and *illi* to their ancestral *bongas* at their *ading* (hearth). In this the *deona* (the diviner or medicine man) worships the *bonga* at his courtyard and sacrifice *sim*.

6. *Harbagya* or *Hanr maghe*: The second after the *maghe* feast on which day the *mageya* spirits were driven away from the village which can cause harm to the villagers as well as to the cattle's. On this day they beat the roof of every house in a group with a belief that this act expels all diseases, miseries from the village and brings peace. They collect rice; vegetables etc. from every household and arrange a feast at the outskirts of the village. Likewise they finish their *Maghe parab*.

Ba or Baha Parab

The next important festival of the Hos was '*ba parab*' or flower festival. The festival took place when the *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) trees in full bloom in March or April. *Sal* flowers were gathered by the village youths and women's and at the *jaherthan* offerings were made to the village deity with new *sal* blooms, rice beer and fowl meat. Worship was followed by dancing. One could not eat new fruits of the jungles or use *sal* leaves for making leaf plates and cups until the *ba parab* was over. The festival was also termed as *phulphalguni* which was observed in the month of Chaitra (February-March). The Ho have the new fruit like Mango, Jack fruit, Mohua (*Madhuca latifolia*) and *Sal* flowers are to be offered to the deities

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before this it was restricted to them to eat these fruits. The festival stretches over a period of four days. On the first day (*He Sakam diang*) the villagers move to the forest. The female members collect Sal leaves, while the male seeks for hunt. Towards mid day all return back to their respective houses and worship the ancestral spirits. Drinking rice beer and dancing in the evening mark the occasion. The day before the *ba* feast the women clean the house and courtyard with *guri* (cow dung). The second day was day of actual ritual, the *deuri* sacrifices chicken and he goats with chanting of *mantras* in honour of *Desauli*, *Gramsiri*, *Singbonga* etc. After ceremonial offering of *Sal* and *Mohua* flowers the priest distributes them among the villagers. Thus drinking and dancing begin. Meat and rice were prepared and feast was arranged on the same afternoon. The third day (*basi musing*) and fourth day (*bala badni*) were meant for the expulsion of the invited spirits. On the third day ancestral spirits were worshiped, while the next day a feast is arranged by all the villagers. Dancing and singing were the major part of the festival.

Batauli Parab

The *batauli parab* took place in July. In this festival the *deuri* worships *Desauli* at *jahera* for protecting their paddy fields from the insects and pests as well as yielding of good crop. Each cultivator sacrificed a fowl and after some rites a twig of *tiril* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) tree was inserted in the bamboo and erect in the paddy field. If this was not followed it was believed that the rice would not come to maturity.

Hero Parab

Hero parab was also associated with the agricultural activities. It was held after the sowing has been completed around the month of July. The *puja* was offered to *Desauli* and *Jahira burhi* to serve their blessings to a good harvest. At first the village priest worship *Desauli bonga* either at the field or in the courtyard. Where he offers *arua* rice, *bel sakam* (leaf of wood apple) and sacrifices a fowl. After that all the other villagers follow the same rituals followed by the *deuri*.

Jomnawa Parab

Jomnawa parab was celebrated when harvesting was started. They offered newly harvest crop to *Singbonga*. Like other festivals it has no fixed date. The *deuri*, the *munda* and other elder member of the village fixed the date. On the fixed date the *deuri* worship *bonga* and sacrifice *sim* for them. The villagers worship their ancestral spirits at their adding and offer them new paddy along with the *illi*. It was then followed by drinking, dancing and singing till late night.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: AN INTERPRETATION

In every religious system, there are three parts. First there is philosophy, which presents the whole scope of that religion setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology. It is the abstraction of philosophy concretised in the more or less imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. The third is ritual. This is still more concrete, and is made up of form and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and

incense and many other things that appeal to the senses (Manish *et al*: 2000: 95). Change is usually constructed as being adaptation by which a society faced with evolving paradigm adapts to the changing acceptance. Continuity on the other hand is holding on to the legacy of cultural heritage handed down through generations. Though changes in religion may occur in any of its three elements, yet more often than not, an understanding of change and continuity is limited to the more concrete aspects to the religion viz, forms, rituals and ceremonies.

The peoples are urbanised day by day due to education as well as contact with outsiders. So their attitude, behaviour, religion etc., were changed regularly. If we critically examine the situation of three areas urban people were changed rapidly because of regular contact with other people mainly Hindu people. But in semi urban areas the studied people were adopting the culture of Hindu people in one hand but in other hand they were preserved their own culture also. The religion of the studied people were deeply connected with environment. The forest people were deeply connected with the forest. Forest is their main economy. So they are worshipped forest as a deity. They were performed their festivals and preserved their religion. After in coming with the regular contact with the neighbouring Hindu population they had adopted various norms and cultures of the neighbouring population but though didn't neglect their own traditional customs. Though the process of syncretism is observed in the rituals sphere of Ho but the level of syncretism was varied in different areas depending upon their socio-cultural contact and ecological environment. In the studied areas it was observed that villages which are nearer to urban town celebrate or participate in *Biswakarma puja*, *Ganesh puja*, *Durga puja* etc. Some of the families in these areas worship Hindu deities like *Lord Shiva*, *Devi Laxmi*, *Lord Ganesha* etc. each day in there houses. It was also observed that many Ho people visit local temple to make offerings. In rural villages it was less in number. But in remote forest village it was totally absent. The use of different types of colour papers, ribbons, flags, plastic flowers, colour powders was also evident during their different puja and festivals. In some cases the Ho people also use the mango leaves, *tulsi sakam* (basil leaves) and *da* (water). It is probably borrowed from the neighbouring Hindu society. According to Majumdar (1950) most of the malevolent *Bongas* of the Hos are not their own and seems to have come from some Hindu equivalent deities. It was also observed in the present study that some of the deities which were worshipped by the Hos have equivalence with the god and goddesses of Hindu pantheon (eg. Dessali or Sing Bonga with Lord Shiva, Jahera Burhi with Devi Durga). The popularity of *Manasa Devi* was not only limited among the Hindus it is equally popular among the tribes particularly in this region. According to Chatterjee and Das (1927) the people of *Purti kili* worship goddess *Manasa* to whom they offer sweets and flowers and before whom they sacrifice fowls and goats.

All the tribal communities of the studied region have a very strong belief in witchcraft. Continuation of any kind of disease for a long time is regarded as the action of *Dian* (witch) or evil *Bongas*. *Ojha* or *Deonwa* is the traditional medicine man among the tribes who tries to find out the causes of disease of the people and their solutions. In the studied villages there are group of specialist- the *ojhas* or *deonwa* whose services are sought depending on the cause of

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illness. Following methods are usually practised in these areas. When a person falls ill, some members of the family takes a handful of *arua* rice and touching the body of the diseased person names all the spirits known to him. The rice is then brought to the *deonwa* known as *Bonga Nam*. The *deonwa* puts the rice in a bowl and asks *Singbonga* and *Nagebonga*, while naming the spirits in succession. In this process if any displacement in the rice is noticed, that particular *Bonga* is believed to have caused the problem. The *Bonga* has to be propitiated if the patient wishes to be cured. In another method a few *arua* rice are taken in a *Sal*-leaf and the *deonwa* touches the body of the diseased person with the leaf. He then utters some magical chants in the name of specified *Bonga*, the patient feels heaviness over his body, which makes the identity of the *Bonga* clear. Two leaf cups of oil are taken to the *deonwa* after they have been touched by the patient. The *deonwa* looks in the oil and discover some signs from which he ascertain which spirits has caused the disease. In all cases sacrifices have to be made along with prayers and incantations. The result of propitiating immediately effect a change in the patient body by showing the signs of possessing by sweats.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it was observed that the rituals and activities associated with the life of the Ho people centred round the agricultural activities. The significant features of changes have occurred in their socio-economic and religious life as mentioned in earlier paragraphs. Their age old traditional *Sarna* religion has undergone a slow change and they practiced the bi-cultural religion i.e. *Sarna* and Hindu religion simultaneously. These changes may have occurred due to the influences of urbanisation, industrialisation, impact of modern education and close contact to neighbouring Hindu cultures in their daily life. Due to the regular contact with the Hindu population, spread of education, developed and easy availability of communication facilities they gradually have started to adopt some rituals and festivals of their neighbouring people. The process of adoption is high in urban villages and it was gradually decreasing in rural and forest villages. They celebrate their traditional rituals and festivals at their village and house levels side by side they also participate in various religious activities of their neighbours. It can also be concluded that the origin of *Sarna* religion and perception of *Bonga* is deeply rooted in their society which shows their strong hold to their ethnic identity in this region. Finally, it may conclude that though some aspects of rituals and festivals of the Ho are highly influenced by the Hindu religion and practices their traditional rituals and festivals are still not much changed.

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Address for correspondence: Sovan Chakraborty, ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta 35 Ballygaunge Circular Road Kolkata-700019, West Bengal
Email: chakraborty.sovan@gmail.com.

TRIBAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT (W. B.): WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SANTALS OF RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

Suchismita Sen Chowdhury¹

Abstract: The tribal people in India remained educationally backward since long. They faced problems of communication as they lived in remote areas, they also had linguistic barriers, economic and socio-cultural constraints in getting education. The Santals were numerically dominant in West Bengal. They formed 51.8% of the total tribal population of the state (census, 2001). They were the major tribe in Birbhum district and they mostly lived in rural areas. The literacy rate of the tribal people of Birbhum district was much lower (25.3%) than the total literacy rate of the district (62.2%). The present paper aims at understanding the situation of the Santals in terms of education in the Birbhum district. For this purpose, two Santal settlements, one in rural area and another in urban area were studied. It was found that there was considerable difference in educational status in the studied population. But overall literacy rate was low. In spite of different development initiatives in West Bengal, the situation of the Santals has hardly improved. Education not only develops individual skills and knowledge, but it also helps in overall development of a community. This paper will be helpful for understanding the situation of the Santals living in rural and urban areas in the context of education and development.

Keywords: Education, development, Santals, rural and urban areas.

INTRODUCTION

Russell (1932) in his divergent theories of education noted that “education is to be considered rather in relation to the community than in relation to the individual”. Education is not only imparting theoretical knowledge, but a process of enculturation and socialization. Education must be associated with the cultural pattern and way of life of specific communities. “One of the avenues to speedy development is education” (Sachhidananda, 1992). Education leads to overall development of an individual and in turn it influences development of a whole society.

The tribal communities in India always remained backward in terms of education. They faced different constraints while tried to move forward in this regard. They were the victims of situation. The efforts were made by the Government and the Missionaries to educate tribal people. But the pace of development was slow for them. Venkataiah (2001) noted that tribal education is not a different kind of education, but it is to suit the special needs and aspirations of the tribal groups who are in different stages of development.

The tribal population in India constituted 8.2% of the total population According to the 2001 Census, the total literacy rate of India was 64.8% while the literacy rate of the Scheduled Tribes (ST) was 47.1%. In West Bengal there were 38 notified Scheduled Tribes as per 2001 census. In West Bengal 43.4% of the total tribal population were literate, whereas the literacy rate of the general population was 68.6%. The tribal people remained far behind the general population in case of literacy.

¹University Research Fellow, South and South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta

The Santals were numerically dominant in West Bengal. They formed 51.8% of the total tribal population of the state (Census, 2001). The Santals have their own language Santhali and they also have script in the form of *Al Chiki* (or *Ol Chiki*). *Al Chiki* was invented by Pandit Raghunath Murmu of Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. The script came in limelight in 1939 (Kundu, 1994). In 2003 the Santhali was recognized as one of the Indian language by the Constitution of India. They faced many challenges to achieve this status for their language. The Santals got opportunities of education through Missionaries and NGOs in West Bengal. They experienced different socio-political upheavals in their life which affected their education. Although the Santals were mainly concentrated in rural areas of West Bengal, there were more literate people in urban areas. The present study was done on the Santals of the Birbhum district. The Santals constituted 87.03% of total tribal population in the district. This paper aims at understanding the gap in education in rural and urban areas of Birbhum district with particular reference to the Santals.

POPULATION AND LITERACY RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN WEST BENGAL

Generally the tribal people were found to stay away from urban area. Following table shows the distribution of ST population in rural and urban areas of West Bengal.

Table No. 1: Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal

Area	Population	
	Number	Percentage
Total	4406794	100.00
Rural	4136366	93.86
Urban	270428	6.14

Source: Census of India, 2001

In West Bengal there were 4,406,794 Scheduled Tribes as per 2001 census constituting 5.5% of the total population. Among them 4136366 (93.86%) individuals lived in rural areas and only 270428 (6.14%) lived in urban area (table no. 1).

Table No. 2: Distribution of the Santals in West Bengal

The Santals	Population		Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	1997222	100.00	1009957	50.57	987265	49.43
Rural	1906372	95.45	962842	95.33	943530	95.57
Urban	90850	4.55	47115	4.67	43735	4.43

Source: Census of India, 2001

There were 19,972,22 Santal population in West Bengal including 50.57% male and 49.43% female. Most of the Santals were living in rural areas (95.45%). A very few percentage of

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them lived in urban areas (4.55%), but many villages were situated near urban area which got the advantages and facilities of urban area (table no. 2).

In 2001 Census it was stated that all children of age 6 years or less should be treated as illiterates and literacy rate will be calculated from 7 years and above. The following table shows the literacy rate of the tribal population in rural and urban areas of West Bengal.

Table No. 3: Literacy rate (in percentage) of the Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal

Population	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All	73.13	53.16	86.13	75.74	77.02	59.61
Scheduled Tribes	56.60	27.88	68.57	48.20	57.38	29.15

Source: Annual Report, 2001

The above table shows that the tribal people in the rural and urban areas were far behind the general population in terms of literacy. In urban area 68.57% male and 48.20% female were literate among the STs. (table no. 3). The tribal male and female living in urban area were more literate than rural area. The facilities for education that could be found in urban areas were absent in rural areas. The problem of communication was one of the major causes for this difference. Lack of interest, poor economic situation and psychological orientation that restricted tribal education in general was more prominent in case of those living in rural areas.

Table No. 4: Literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes and the Santals in West Bengal

Literacy Rate (above 7+ years)			
Population	Total	Male	Female
All Scheduled Tribes	43.4	57.4	29.2
The Santals	42.2	57.3	27.0

As per 2001 Census, among all STs, 43.4 per cent of the population has been returned as literate, which was lower than the national average (47.1%). The male literacy rate of 57.4% and female of 29.2%, showed the gender disparity in literacy. The literacy rate of the Santals was very low (42.2%) and was also lower than the literacy rate of total tribal population of the state. Among the Santals 57.3% male and only 27% females were literate (table no. 4).

POPULATION AND LITERACY RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN BIRBHUM

Dalton (1973) noted that the Santals were scattered in a strip of Bengal, extending for about 350 miles from the river Ganges to Baitarani comprising of three districts of Bengal; Birbhum, Bankura and Medinipur. As per the Census of 1872 the Santal population of Birbhum district was only 6954. The Santal migration into Birbhum which had begun after the enactment of the Permanent Settlement continued to take place well after the dislocations of the *Hul* (the Santal Rebellion). During 1881 the Santals got "right of occupancy" in Birbhum. By 1901, the Santal

population rose to 47221 apparently as a result of immigration. The Santals cleared jungles and established new communities (Duyker, 1987). Presently there were 156464 Santals in Birbhum district constituting 4.33% of the total Santals living in West Bengal.

Table No. 5: Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in Birbhum District

Area	Male		Female		Population	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Rural	99598	97.81	99014	97.75	198612	97.78
Urban	2233	2.19	2282	2.25	4515	2.22
Total	101831	100.00	101296	100.00	203127	100.00

Source: Census of India, 2001

In Birbhum district 97.78% of the total tribal population lived in rural areas while only 2.22% lived in urban areas. A very few tribal people live near urban areas. The tendency of the Santals was to live in clustered settlements and in pockets even if they were living near urban area (table no. 5).

Table No. 6: Literacy rate of the Scheduled Tribes in Birbhum District

Area	Male		Female		Population	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Rural	35644	71.14	14459	28.86	50103	25.23
Urban	851	63.60	487	36.40	1338	29.63
All	36495	70.95	14946	29.05	51441	25.32

Source: Census of India, 2001

It has been found that 25.32% of the total tribal populations in the district were literate. Though a very few percentage of population lived in urban area, the literacy rate among the urban living tribes (29.63%) were more than the rural population (25.23%). In both rural and urban areas the males were found to be more literate than the females. The gender difference was little higher in case of rural area as there were 28.86% literate female in rural area compared to 36.40% of the female in urban area (table no. 6).

SITUATION OF THE STUDIED AREA

To understand the present situation of the Santals living in rural and urban areas, two villages from two blocks of Birbhum district were considered for the present study. These two blocks were Bolpur Sriniketan and Muhammad Bazar. The two villages were chiefly inhabited by the Santals. The villages were selected on the basis of the location. The village Bondanga of Ruppur Gram Panchayat (Bolpur Sriniketan block) was situated near urban area and village Chaglakuri of Choricha Gram Panchayat (Muhammad Bazar block) was located away from urban area and near the forest. It was considered as the rural settlement.

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The village Bondanga was situated near the Bolpur town. The schools, colleges and universities were situated within 4 to 6 kilometers from the area. Communication facility was good. Train and buses were available. On the other hand, the village Chaglakuri was situated at West Bengal Jharkhand border. The main road near the village connected the state with neighbouring state Jharkhand. The only means of communication to the Suri town (20 km away) was bus.

Population: The population structure of the villages has been given below.

Table No. 7: Population of the studied village in urban area

Studied areas	No. of Famillies	Population	Male		Female	
			Number r	Percentage e	Number r	Percentage e
Urban area Bondanga	47	214 (100.00)	104	48.60	110	51.40
Rural area Chaglakuri	48	229 (100.00)	122	53.28	107	46.72

There were 88.07% Santal families inhabiting in 47 households of the village Bondanga. The village was inhabited by 214 Santals including 48.60% male and 51.40% female. Here number of females was more than the males. In Chaglakuri 92.71% of the total population were the Santals and they inhabited 48 households. Among 229 Santals in Chaglakuri 107(46.72%) were females and 122 (53.28%) were males (table no. 7).

THE SANTALS AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL STATUS IN THE STUDIED AREA:

The article 21A recognised the fundamental right to education of the age-group 6 to 14 years in place of age group 0–14 years in the old Article 45. For elementary education in tribal areas Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has played an important role. The *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) recognised the varied issues and challenges in tribal education in view of the heterogeneous structure of tribal population in the country. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is an effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country (*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, 2007).

Literacy rate:

Literacy rate and level of education are basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a society. Spread of literacy is generally associated with important traits of modern civilization such as modernization, urbanization, industrialization, communication and commerce. Literacy forms an important input in overall development of individuals enabling them to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment better and respond to it appropriately. A person is said to be literate when he or she can read and write with understanding. Thus, who can sign only and who can not sign are said to be illiterate.

Table No. 8: Literacy rate of the studied population

Population	Urban area Bondanga	Rural area Chaglakuri
Male	58.16	53.21
Female	49.02	41.58
Total	53.50	47.62

In the studied areas 53.50% of the total population above 7 years in Bondanga were literate and in Chaglakuri 47.62% were literate. Among both males and females the literacy rate in urban area was more than rural area. In general there was gap among the literacy rate among males and females of the studied area (table no. 8).

Educational level:

Higher levels of education and literacy lead to a greater awareness and also contributes in improvement of economic and social conditions. It acts as a catalyst for social enlistment enhancing the returns on investment made in almost every aspect of development effort, be it population control, health, hygiene, environmental degradation control, employment of weaker sections of the society. The following table shows the distribution of the studied population in respect of educational level.

Table No. 9: Educational level wise distribution of the studied population .

Education Levels	Urban area-Bondanga			Rural area-Chaglakuri		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Can not sign	31 (31.63)	41 (41.41)	72 (36.55)	35 (32.41)	46 (45.54)	81 (38.76)
Can sign only	10 (10.20)	11 (11.11)	21 (10.66)	16 (14.81)	13 (12.87)	29 (13.88)
Below Primary	9 (9.18)	5 (5.05)	14 (7.11)	10 (9.26)	10 (9.90)	20 (9.57)
Primary	31 (31.63)	26 (26.26)	57 (28.93)	27 (25.00)	21 (20.79)	48 (22.97)
Middle School	11 (11.22)	13 (13.13)	24 (12.18)	10 (9.26)	9 (8.91)	19 (9.09)
Matriculation	5 (5.10)	3 (3.03)	8 (4.06)	10 (9.26)	2 (1.98)	12 (5.74)
Higher Secondary	1 (1.02)	—	1 (0.51)	—	—	—
Total	98 (100.00)	99 (100.00)	197 (100.00)	108 (100.00)	101 (100.00)	209 (100.00)

Note: Percentage denoted in parentheses

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It was found that there were many illiterate males and females in the studied areas who could not even sign. In Bondanga they constituted 36.55% and in Chaglakuri they constituted 38.76% of the total population above 7 years of age. The individuals who could sign only have learnt to sign their names either in the school or from non-formal educational institution or from any other literate individual. In Bondanga 10.66% could sign only while in Chaglakuri they constituted 13.88% of the total population. In the villages below primary level education was given either in ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) centre or in SSK (Sarva Siksha Kendra). Pre School learning for the children (age group 3-6 years) was possible in ICDS or in SSK. Boys and girls in the age group 3-6 years attended ICDS Centres regularly. The objective of pre school education was to strengthen the psychological, physical and social development of children and to develop school going habits as well as to prevent school drop outs. The State Govt. has launched "School Chalo Karmasuchi", an intensive enrolment drive for the children 5+ to 13+ age group. There were 3 females in Bondanga who did not admit to school till 7 years.

In Bondanga only one male was found to pass Higher Secondary. But in Chaglakuri there was none who passed Higher Secondary. In both the areas Madhyamik/Matriculation passed male and females were few. It was interesting to find that in Chaglakuri individuals belonging to matriculate level were more (5.74%) than in Bondanga (4.06%). Maximum literate people in both rural and urban areas belonged to the primary level. There were 9.09% individual at middle school level in Chaglakuri and they were mostly school going children. In Bondanga 11.22% male and 13.33% female were in middle school level. This ratio was little higher than the village Chaglakuri. In Bondanga children irrespective of sex were found to be interested in higher studies. In general, the level of education was found to be low in both the areas, but the Santals living in rural area were found to be more backward than the people living near urban area in terms of educational level (table no. 9).

The school participation of children, especially tribal children was influenced by interplay of a range of factors at school, society and family. For school participation, ideally, all the three factors should be positive or at least one or two factors should be strongly favorable. The unfavorable environment leads to stagnation and drop out.

Drop outs at different level:

The problem of drop out at different levels for the tribal students was a matter of concern. The tribal children in most cases could not maintain regularity in school and therefore remains absent leading to stagnation in the same class. Cases of drop out were very common in the villages. Few case studies are given below.

Case studies

- ♦ Lakshmi Soren of Bondanga aged 15 years could not go to school regularly because she had to take care of her younger siblings when her parents were out for work. She dropped at class eight.
- ♦ Robon Hansda aged 30 years of the same village was a primary school drop out. He left school because he was beaten and abused by his teacher regularly. He was afraid

to attend the school as the behaviour of the teacher was painful. Thus he decided to drop from school.

- ♦ Sunil Hansda at the age of 16 years left school because of economic crisis and started working in his father's land at Chaglakuri.
- ♦ Sarodia Hansda (aged 22 years) of the same village could not buy books before exam due to poverty and thus could not sit for class five exam and left school. After few years her father fixed her marriage and she was married at the age of 15 years.
- ♦ Munni Murmu (aged 22 years) of Chaglakuri appeared in Madhyamik exam from Jharkhand (her father's house). She failed and got married at the age of 18 years.

From the case studies it was found that in rural area economic crisis and stagnation were the two main causes of drop out. In urban area the female dropped because she had to take care of her younger siblings. The male left school because of the fear of the teacher. Thus the reasons could be many. Following table shows the rate of male and female drop outs at different education levels in rural and urban areas.

Table No. 10: Drop outs in the village near urban area

Education Levels	Urban area-Bondanga			Rural area-Chaglakuri		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary	10 (38.46)	16 (61.54)	26 (50.0)	11 (42.31)	11 (55.0)	22 (47.83)
Middle School	10 (38.46)	7 (26.92)	17 (32.69)	7 (26.92)	7 (35.0)	14 (30.43)
Matriculation	5 (19.23)	3 (11.54)	8 (15.38)	8 (30.77)	2 (10.0)	10 (21.74)
Higher Secondary	1 (3.85)	—	1 (1.92)	—	—	—
Total	26 (100.00)	26 (100.00)	52 (100.00)	26 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	46 (100.00)

Note: Percentage denoted in parentheses

A minimum of 4 years of essential schooling is necessary for any individual to satisfy the census definition of literacy. But drop out rates indicated that the Santals in the studied areas remained educationally backward for high rate of drop out. In all the villages the rate of drop out was maximum in primary level and in middle school. The number of female drop out was less than male drop out in Chaglakuri, while in Bondanga the dropout rate for male and female were similar (50% each). In Bondanga 19.23% male and 11.54% female left studies after Matriculation. Dropout was a common problem for both the areas. It was found that in Chaglakuri 47.83% and in Bondanga 50% was dropped out at primary level. In middle school

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the ratio was 30.43% and 32.69% respectively. Drop out at various levels was a common problem for the tribal people whether they live in urban area or in rural area (table no. 10).

Poverty, lack of interest, involvement in household work or in agricultural field was found to be some of the causes behind high rate of dropout. The boys often participate in economic activities which resulted in absenteeism. Since they had to supplement the meager family income, they could not afford to send their children to school. They were often forced to drop out even before they complete elementary education. Lack of interest from the student's part and lack of encouragement from the parental side also goes against the students. Irregularity leads to stagnation in a class for more than one year. Absenteeism were mostly responsible for wastage or dropout at primary and middle school level. The environment of the school and the system of teaching often influenced wastage. In rural areas such problems were more prominent and in case of female it was even greater. Another reason for drop out was that the tribal people did not like to move away from their villages. Thus they could not enjoy hostel facilities. In case of females, rate of wastage remained high as the responsibility of their family lies on their shoulder. They had to take care of their siblings while their parents went out for work and thus they could not attend school in time. Females were often getting married at early age leaving their school unfinished. Continuing studies after marriage was very unusual to the tribal women. In rural areas, the demand for education among the poorer sections of the population was much lower than it was in urban areas.

TRIBAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Education is one of the key factors behind socio-economic development of a community. The tribal people faced different problems in education. In general economic, ecological, psychological, linguistic and socio-cultural constraints restricted their development through education. At the same time the flaws in educational system in India contributed to the marginalization of tribal people in education.

The British Government in India did not consider the need for educating indigenous people. In 19th Century Missionaries took initiative to educate tribal people in different parts of India. The tribal people were educationally, socially and economically exploited right from ancient times till Independence. After Independence, the Five year plans considered tribal education as an important part of development. The tribal people mainly lived in rural areas and the impetus was given on rural development in general. At the same time voluntary organizations took initiative in their part to change the situation of tribal world by spreading education among them. The importance of elementary education was felt during 1921. Initiatives were taken through day school, boarding school and Ashram schools for the tribal children. But they were hardly successful (Yadappanavar, 2003).

The Constitution of India in 1950 took certain measures for safeguarding the rights and interests of the Scheduled Tribes (ST). Legislative and executive measures were adopted by the Central and State Government for the development of the tribes. The Directive Principles in Article 46 of the Constitution says: "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Das, 1990).

The incentives and facilities given by the Central Government to the Scheduled Tribe children and for the development of their education were in terms of establishment of schools, colleges, technical and vocational training institutions, hostel facilities providing scholarship, stipend and free ship, books and stationeries, mid day meals etc. In addition to this, reservation of seats and relaxation in criteria for admission to different educational institution has been initiated.

DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN BIRBHUM

In the sphere of school education several steps were taken to achieve universalization of elementary education for all eligible learners of the state. On the way of achieving this, the State Government implemented the twin projects viz. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarba Siksha Abhijan (SSA) as additional sources. There were 564 Sishu Siksha Kendra (SSK) in Birbhum (2002- 2003). The number of SSK increased since 2001-2002 (479). There were 200 Non-formal Education Centres till 2003 (District Statistical Hand Book, 2003). In the SSK the focus remains on the tribal students.

Under mass literacy programme the target of learners and the number of approved centers in the Birbhum district has been shown below.

Table No. 10: Target learners under continuing education programme in Birbhum

District	Date of sanction	Target of learners in lakhs	Continuing Education Centres	Nodal Continuing Education Centres
Birbhum	March, 1997	10.49	1737	290

Source: Department of Mass Education and Extension, Government of West Bengal.

Under 11th Five Year Plan, the Special Area Programme dealt with tribal development. This programmes focused on the following points:

1. Creation of Ashram hostel.
2. Mobile dispensary at tribal village.
3. Electrification in ITDP mouzas.
4. Scheme for teaching 'Alchliki Alphabet' to be introduced.
5. Opening up of coaching centre for ST people at least one per sub-division.
6. Book grants for SC and ST students from below five standards.

In this plan period tribal education got impetus. The Government took initiative to give tribal students proper environment for study. They were provided with book grants, maintenance at the hostels, special merit scholarship and other scholarships. Number of tribal schools and hostels are increased to facilitate their education irrespective of rural and urban area.

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Book Grants

The grant for books varied with the level of education. There was no community wise difference in grants. But the variation lie in economic situation of the family. The BPL (Below Poverty Level) families got more grant than APL (Above Poverty Level). The table shows the educational standard wise book grants given per year to the students.

Table No. 11: Educational standard wise book grants (in Rs./year)

CLASS	BPL	APL
V	20	20
VI	210	50
VII	260	150
VIII	260	150
IX	500	200
X	80	100

In the middle school level the grant was maximum, while in standard five and in standard ten it was lower than the rest. In class V some book were provided by the school and in class ten the students hardly need to buy books. In Class IX and X the student follow same book and prepare for Madhyamik.

Scholarship

There were many types of scholarships for general as well as tribal students.

Special merit Scholarship

Scholarship provided for merited student was fixed for all in the class IX-XII and it was Rs. 400/month. The criterion for getting this scholarship was that the annual family income of the student should remain within Rs. 36000. There was reservation for this scholarship; 38 Scheduled Caste (SC) students and 18 Scheduled Tribe (ST) students got it in the district.

Additional merit scholarship

This was meant for the girls of all classes. Here the criterion for selection were: annual family income should remain within Rs. 60,920 and 75% attendance was must. District wise quota for this scholarship included 16 SC students and 7 ST students.

Amount of scholarship :	V & VI	–	Rs. 100
	VII & VIII	–	Rs. 125
	IX & X	–	Rs. 150

Up gradation of scholarship

This was given to SC and ST students of class IX to XII. The district quota includes 9 SC students and 4 ST students.

Besides these there were unclean occupation scholarship and Post-Matric scholarship.

Hostels

Encouraging the tribal student to study in the hotels was a positive measure toward education development. If they stay out of the home they will be able to avoid the family pressure which generally leads to drop out. The boy students can be kept out of economic activities and the females can stay out of homely responsibilities.

There were Ashram hostels and school attached hostels for the tribal student in the district.

Ashram hostel

There were 11 Primary and 10 Secondary Ashram hostels where students got stipend and the amount was Rs. 400/ year.

School attached hostels

There were hostels in 54 schools. In these school attached hostels there were 1140 SC student and 1120 ST students.

Apart from this, the tribal students got maintenance for studying in the hostel from class five to nine. The tribal student got Rs. 400 per year as maintenance (*Eleventh Five Year Plan* (2007-2012) and *Annual Plan* (2007-2008)).

Thus, it can be said that the government has taken so many fruitful initiatives to change the situation of tribal education. The scholarships for the economically backward population have been an excellent idea for motivating poor children to study. The book grants can meet up their one of the basic needs in education. Instead of such effort towards educational development, the scope for female child remained low as most of the hostels were meant for the boys only. Another factor which lags them behind is lack of awareness. In rural area this lack of awareness was a hindrance towards development.

In the studied areas the students and their parents hardly had any idea about the scholarship facilities. There were few students in urban area who were studying in missionaries and staying at hostels, but in rural area there were only one student who was staying at missionary hostel at Jharkhand.

Recently the Santals have experienced new dimension of educational development. A project on creation of a software module for learning the Santhali language has been initiated by the Jadavpur University. It is being funded by World Bank under Technical Education for Quality Improvement Programme. The software has a glossary (Santhali-Bangla-English) of about 1,000 words and provides transliteration support (Ghosh, 2007).

CONCLUSION

The term education (as per Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1964) stands for “the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young (and by extension, to adults) in preparation for the work of life”. Education makes people capable of adaptation to various aspects of our social existence (Bag, 1984). Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward groups in India. Among the tribal people in India the educational standard remained low since ages, because of various constraints they faced.

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The Santals are one of the major tribes in West Bengal. They were enlightened by various educational initiatives taken since British period in India. They fought to get their language and script recognized by the Constitution. In the primary schools of West Bengal teaching in Santhali has been accepted officially. West Bengal Government has implemented several development plans and programmes meant for the development of education for the tribal people specially. But still the literacy rate of the tribal people remained low in the state. The difference was prominent in rural and urban areas. The tribal people mostly lived in rural areas, but the literacy rate was higher among the people of urban area. From the studied villages of Birbhum district it was found that in general the educational standard of the tribal people was very poor. There was hardly any difference in the rural and urban area. The rate of drop out was high in both the areas. The causes being poverty, lack of motivation, early marriage of the girls and other social constraints. The females were still less educated than the males. They could hardly cross the boundary of Matriculation. The number of literate was more in urban area than in rural areas. Higher education was also more common in urban area than in rural areas. But the gap was not very large. The Government has taken initiatives to provide more opportunities to the tribal children. Facilities have been extended through increasing hostel, scholarship, book grants etc in Birbhum district.

So, it can be said that instead of different planning and development activities implemented in West Bengal the situation of the tribal education has hardly improved. It is well comprehend that development of any society is impossible without the development of education. But such efforts could not make the development universal. Thus gap remained between rural and urban area and between male and female. It lacked community based approach.

The situation could be changed if awareness could be generated among the tribal people regarding the facilities provided by the Government for education. At the same time awareness generation programme can be organized in tribal areas to inspire the parents. Teachers should be trained specially for tribal area. Special remuneration and reward could be announced for them. National Population Policy on education should be taken more seriously in this regard. The development of the tribal education could be slow, but it is not impossible.

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Address for correspondence: Suchismita Sen Chowdhury, University Research Fellow, South and South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta. E-mail: s_senchowdhury@yahoo.com

FACING EXCLUSION AT AGING: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN AN OLD HOME IN KOLKATA METROPOLIS

Tanusree Shaw¹, Dr Sutapa Mukhopadhyay², Arnab Das³, Soumi Dey⁴
Nabanita Goswami⁵ and Subrata Sankar Bagchi⁶

Abstract: The present authors in the paper focuses on the phenomena of exclusion of elderly people above sixty years living in an old home of Kolkata metropolis. According to the objective of understanding the insiders' interpretations of exclusion from their families and participation in the local social setting of an old home have become the resource of the data. The data were the outcome of participant observation for six months in the old home of sixty elderly residents and by means of depth interviews, life histories, and conversation. The typical examples of the phenomena of exclusion have only been selected for the paper, which envisages their active meaning making of the past and present to hold on to the self-dignity, identity and relatively 'better' life, though with individual remorse, ambivalence, nostalgia, 'positive' self-determination and optional participation in the new social setting. The nature and process of exclusion of two genders, man and woman, differ essentially to the extent that they may be studied as two separate phenomena. It again points out that gender is more intrinsically a structural principle of society and culture. They mirror a living at changing social positions principally resulted from shift of position of power of the elderly individuals in the earlier social setting or family. The inventory of the highly productive cultural space of the elderly people in an Indian metropolis needs the complementary process of participation of larger society or its policy to reposit it in the inadequate framework, where aging is decay, less meaningful, less productive and so on.

Keywords: Aging, Old Home, Exclusion, Inclusion, Urban and Gender.

AGING, INSIGHT AND EXCLUSION

Aging is said to be a series of transition from one set of social roles to another, which is structured by the social system rather than biological one. The present effort is go through the observations of the social position (status, role), Identity and marginalization (hidden) of the 'Senior Citizens', living in metropolitan social enclosure of Kolkata. This qualitative endeavor is to illustrate on both the processes of exclusion and inclusion working with their age and gender, though the exclusion is the central process among the elderly people in an Indian metropolis Kolkata.

The phenomena of aging, usually 'negatively' envisaged, have long been an issue of including this section of society back into the genuinely productive fold. In the face of the

¹Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

²Lecturer (In Senior Scale), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

³Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

⁴Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

⁵Guest Lecturer in Anthropology, New Alipore College, Kolkata

⁶Reader in Anthropology, Bangabasi (evening) College, Kolkata

growing attention to the increasing threat of exclusion and marginalisation of the elderly population, scholars engaged in research on 'aging' and 'late life' have been interested in defining what constitutes successful aging, since Simmons (1945) asserted that the desire for a long, healthy, and active life was a cultural universal (Collings 2001).

In recent years, the quest for understanding what determines successful aging has focused on different components of the biological, social, psychological, and cultural features of aging. Indeed, numerous books and articles (see, for example, Palmer and Luikhart 1972; Elrick 1978; Neuhaus & Neuhaus 1982; Keith *et al.* 1994; Gibson 1995; Ikels *et al.* 1995; Steverink *et al.* 1998) have endeavored to define what it means to age successfully and what variables contribute to the attainment of a good old age. Little research (but see Keith *et al.* 1994), however, has addressed the question of successful aging from an emic viewpoint, seeking how contextual features of a cultural setting can shape the ways in which people conceptualize and define what constitutes a 'good' old age as a productive resource of better inclusive policy of different societies. Nevertheless with Jeste's (2005) recent observation on difficulties in studying successful aging due to the lack of agreement on the nomenclature, the processes of exclusion and inclusion may again be revisited in different cultural settings of the world. The present work particularly focuses on the social exclusion and marginalization of the people at elderly age in a metropolitan setting in India. The phenomenon of social exclusion/marginalization is wide and it is difficult to find one definition that would reflect its complexity. If exclusion means voluntary isolation, or more often, isolation forced by external conditions (Jarosz ed. 2008), such exclusion in case of elders can be understood from Durkheimian strand. It identifies exclusion as a form of anomie where the focus is on issues concerning participation and integration. From Atchley's (1988) gerontological context, which define exclusion as a form of institutional disengagement, while Madanipour *et al.* (1998) show,

"Space has, therefore, a major role in the integration or segregation of urban society. It is a manifestation of social relationships while affecting and shaping the geometries of these relationships. This leads to the argument that social exclusion cannot be studied without also looking at spatial segregation and exclusion. Social cohesion or exclusion, therefore, are indeed socio-spatial phenomena" (p. 81).

Similarly, Keith reverses the scene of space in positive and directions,

"...the situation of the elderly in modern societies is unknown in a profound sense: they occupy a space in the life course that is new territory in human experiences. Extended life, better health, and retirement laws have created a new interval between work and death; and the people who occupy it now are pioneers who must explore and define the potential of a new territory for human habitation" (1982, p. 1).

However, in the said urban metropolis of India, old age is viewed through negative stereotypes and as a stage of life to be dreaded. Older people are stereotyped as inflexible, uninteresting, egocentric, demanding, imitable, unattractive, reminiscing, enfeebled, and burdensome to society (Butler 1975). The aged widows are the worst sufferer than other in their old age mainly due to various factors contributed by a patriarchic society (Mullatti 1997). The elder widows are identified as a special concern group in view of their increasing number and

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dependency and they are doubly marginalized due to combined effects of aging and widowhood (Jamuna 1990; Jammuna. *et. al.* 2003).

OBJECTIVE, METHOD AND SETTING

The present paper endeavours to focus solely on some glimpsed interpretation of the typical exclusion/inclusion of the elderly Bengalis above sixty years of age living at an old home in Kolkata metropolis. The exclusion from their earlier social circles is narrated in their own views. On the other hand, the process of displacement from earlier social positions appears to open up new possibilities of inclusion or participation in other social circles, though optional in most of the cases. Simultaneously the paper touches upon the differential Impact of gender on both men and women. The purpose is also to locate their own meaning of success of their past and present in order to go for the avenues of inclusion in right direction.

It was settled to conduct a qualitative study. A purposively selected Old Age Home, named **Nabonibas** situated at southern end of Kolkata Metropolis was the field site for nearly six months at 2007-2008. In this old home men and women reside in separate buildings. The ratio of men and women was not equal; women were more in number. All the sixty Bengali residents gave their consents for conducting interviews and observation on their daily living, past and present aspects of life. In-depth interviews, structured interviews, unstructured interviews, case study and observation methods were used for deeper understanding of the situations of the aged people. This study is minute understanding of subjective experience shared with the fieldworker; the investigator tried to unearth the relevant issues and interpretation of experience across their life spans and how those individuals negotiated their circumstances and make them meaningful.

The old home, while studied, consisted of sixty elderly men and women, of whom the concentration is much higher in the range of age between 70 years to 79 years (Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Distribution of the residents of the old homebased on gender and age-groups

Age groups	in years 60-64	in years 65-69	in years 70-74	in years 75-79	in years 80+	Total
Woman	5	8	11	11	5	40
Man	2	3	7	6	2	20
Total	7	11	18	17	7	60

EXCLUSION

The consideration of exclusion/inclusion may start from the processes by which elderly people enter into the old age home. They begin to experience their new spatial context of living with memories of past space of life. They explain reasons for joining the old homes in varied manner:

1. Discordances and widening gaps of patterns of thinking, life styles, likes and dislikes between generations
2. Economic reasons of family

3. Shortage of living space
4. Silent or pronounced disobedience of the younger members of the family to the decisions of the elders.
5. Lack of care, attention and autonomy
6. Displacement from the earlier roles of power
7. Unbearable feelings of marginalisation and exclusion of the aged in the earlier family setting.

'Exclusion' denotes more negative eventualities that involve rejection, avoidance and distancing from other family members. In the old age home, elderly people experienced greater distance from known earlier social network and they develop new types of relationship with society. They might have passed through such as torture, conflict and conformity, and marginalized in terms of social, economic, and cultural dimensions.

Verbal and emotional torture is a big cause for their exclusion from the family. First day, author visited old age home and met a Binita Ghose, a seventy-five years old lady. Since last five years Binita Ghose has been living in this Old Age. Before coming to this home, she lived with her younger son, daughter-in-law and grand-children. She had own flat but her son has sold the flat and shifted her to his father-in-law's house. She was silent; could not say anything. Her daughter-in-law began to torture her mentally and physically. For example, she narrated,

"One day, I was sleeping in my bed; my daughter-in-law came and switched off the fan. I spent all the night without fan".

Again she recites,

"I was taking my lunch; my daughter-in-law suddenly shouted the comment that it was very condemnable for me to take food on her father's money. I was plunged with tears and I felt the detachment from the family.... I came to my daughter's house and told her to arrange an old home for me."

Tremendous mental pain ensued from their collapse of expectations and desires from the close ones. These pushed them to the separation from the families. For example, respondent Sabita Sannyal, a sixty-nine years old lady described that at first Durga Puja festival, her younger son wanted to give her money but she could not take this. She said to her son,

"Why should I take this money? You compelled me to move here. Nobody comes to an old home on one's own. After the separation, I feel that I am well enough without my son. And I wish you to spend your life with full happiness".

"Like everybody" she felt the dilemma to accept the new identity of a resident of home, as "we cannot forget our past life". Before coming to the old home they were in different beloved roles to their family members and the role performances in their age-old habitats developed several attachments and identities, which they had to leave. For the crisis of identity many of the respondents expressed their temporary desires at intervals to return to their families. Such exclusion is always ambivalent on behalf of the excluded old people here.

The growing conflicts between the generations make the exclusion inevitable. Realization of negligence from the next generation and the different values, perspectives and expectations

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of the elderly people create dispute between the elderly and younger family members. The Elderly people have 'traditional' mindset and always think that younger generation will behave with respect to them as the same way they would do to their elders. Rina Banerjee is a sixty-five years old woman narrated,

"Why should I live with my son? Has he paid any heed to my words? Moreover, he married against our consent and even without informing us. It is the main reason for my husband's death."

Economic dependencies associated with physical infirmity are other dimensions for social exclusion of old age. There is a relationship between ageing, the economic structure and loss of a productive role. Economic roles assigned to men since early youth means that the loss of ability to earn and to govern the allocation of resources has serious consequences for men's position in family. In youth and middle age, many men are household heads in terms power and wealth, but after retirement from the service especially the downgrading of his position has every possibility to lead to the maladjustment with new center of power and wealth in family. In this old home, majority of the aged men depend on their pension. In case of women they were housewives and depended on their husband but after husband's death they depend on the widow pension. Most of the retired old men culminate their narration of maladjustment with their families in the consequences of their retirements from service and loss of position in the families. For example, Sivanath Mukherjee said,

"As long you contribute money to your family, you acquire importance from them. Besides, there is no value for aged man, no place in family. Then one must go to old home or way apart from the family and that's why I am here and according to my own will."

Utpal Banerjee is a seventy years retired service holder. He worked in Military. Once he lost his left leg in a mission, he gradually became a burden to his family. He resides here for five years. He mourns,

"As long as you can work, people will give you care, bestow pride and they also love you. But you loss the ability, you are almost dead to them, a burden of decaying corpse..."

With days of growing 'Modernisation' the younger generations related to the people of this old home are frequently said to shun off their responsibility towards their parents and other associated social duties. Sometimes, their occupation enforces them to live away from their parents. The aged having traditional Indian mindset of living together in form of joint family feel themselves neglected from earlier roles of being effectively attached to their succeeding generation and the society at large. They think the younger generation wishes to live separately and they do not give importance to the sentiment, emotion, love, of elders. With the feeling of failing to combat the exclusion some of them resorted to the old home, where again they express that they suffer from loneliness, powerlessness, insecurity and lack of spirit for effective adjustment. Ambivalent attitudes to adaptation to the changing world around them and their own changing social positions result in the withdrawal from social gathering, family party, any discussion, entertainment etc. Sutapa Bose narrated,

"At present, there is no little moment of happiness. All moments are much suffocating, whenever I think of my past. I have no desire now. I do not like any gathering. I will remain as I am, my days have already passed; only few are left, and after that I will be free."

Birendra Mukherjee said

"Always lived with family and it became my habit; so is too tough to live alone in new environment, but my son could never understand this".

The exclusion of the elderly people in old home from the family and other previously close circles, thus may appear, mutual, assertive, and yet less desirable.

INCLUSION

Finally, in old home they seek new arenas of participation in local annual function, festival occasions, other local functions and events, various activities and gossip among themselves. Participations in drama, singing, recitation and other activities are regular phenomena, though not for every old resident. Few of them like to spend time with children of the neighbourhood or in local club (in case of men) or gardening etc. inclusion sometimes take place with their positive attitudes and work are limited in the optional participation in the local social setting of the old home. They adapt new roles, status and relationships. It is reported that the residents never interfere in the life of any other resident with whom they share space. The experience of separation from the close ones put them in restrained attitudes toward others. They live only with their nostalgia. It does not mean they never talk to each other or make humor and fun. Generally they spend their time by reading books, newspapers, and magazines and watching T.V. Prabir Kumar Nath said,

"Old age is a phase which comes in everybody's life, so it must undergo positive mind and attitude. So, I wish to spend the rest of my life enjoying whatever I am left with."

Again kamala Pal narrated

"There is no retirement, as long you want to work, you can work. In this old age home, I took the role of supervisor for maintenance. I do this job according to my own will."

The sudden isolation from the family circle thwarts the process of adjustment in the new environment. Rina Banerjee devotes her time to teach the neighborhood-children and she takes delight in the job. She is happy because she has found a teacher within her. She thinks that she can spend the time productively. With his new productive role, she included herself in a social process and on the other hand, society included her new roles. She came to this old age home without complaining anything to anybody as she wants to spend her life independently and peacefully.

CONTEXT OF GENDER

The study explored the relationship between gender and old age. The study noticed that older women occupy in society a lower position than men especially in terms of economic status. The differences between two genders in terms of economic, power and freedom are very prominent. It has noticed the women are 'sent' to old age home after husbands' death, when their authority was denied by their successors. In case of men, majority was economically independent. They get either pension or interests from savings. They had chosen old home according to their wish. Majority of the women are dependent upon their sons or son-in-laws. Few, who are economically independent, they get either widow pension or interests from

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husbands' savings. Only two cases were found where they get money from their own savings as they did jobs previously.

There are few compulsory rules for the members of old home but for the men some rules are slackened. For example men can spend time still late night. Insecurity played a crucial role for women than men in the old home, even in the rule makers or organizers of the old home. It was also seen that the women missed their families and they felt more powerless, lonely, depressed, and insecure than men, but still there are no arrangements to resolve the disparity of services to them according to their need.

CONCLUSION

The present paper in terms of insiders' interpretations of exclusion, either based on self-determination or forced exclusion or a mix of the two shows the exclusion from their family leaves little room from getting included otherwise. The aged people are left alone.

The study portrays the consequences of shift in the positions of power in the family leads to the exclusion of the aged, not the reverse. The marginalization of the aged overtly or covertly is coercive and happens in terms of social, economic, and cultural means and ends.

The narrations of the respondents allude to the meanings of dignity and identity the elderly people hold on. The insider interpretations themselves sound as lively and as active as of any human condition. In spite of exclusion, the earlier life remains the resource of living and evaluation of lived experiences, which are not included back in the culture at large.

Principal suffering from powerlessness, loneliness, depression, insecurity, mourning about the past, ambivalent attitudes to acceptance of reality and to effective adjustment with the giving situations of life undermine their positive spirits to life. It is very conspicuous that the women faced more vulnerable conditions than men. The nature and process of exclusion of two genders, man and woman, differ essentially to the extent that they may be studied as two separate phenomena. It again points out that gender is more intrinsically a structural principle of society and culture.

Study reflect the phenomenon that older people are always trying to make them comfortable with the new set up of living in old home, though the participation or inclusion in a new life remains optional, thus again not securing essential importance of the society. In the conception and organization of old home, in particular and in general, there is a massive lack of more effective discourse of helping the lives of the aged newly inclusive and essentially contributive to culture. The society at large needs to engage in the two-way complementary empowering process of active meaning-making and self-determined actions of the aged and taking back the same to the society productively and meaningfully.

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A BRIEF ADDRESS TO THE DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY AND HEALTH OF THE SEX WORKERS AT THE MARGIN OF KOLKATA METROPOLIS

Nabanita Goswami¹ and Arnab Das²

Abstract: This paper aims to describe phenomenon among Commercial sex workers and their *Babus* (staying clients of individual sex workers) of one setting of sex workers at the margin of Kolkata metropolis by means of contextually qualitative and numerical data. It rather seeks to describe briefly the aspects of risk behaviour, practices, awareness and perception of sexuality and the felt problems regarding them. The fieldwork used interviews, observation and inter-subjective appreciation. In the field of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS research, many of the social phenomena being studied with informed consent are personal and sometimes illicit. The purposes of selecting them in the setting include the exploration of the effects of intervention programmes very much operative among them.

Keywords: CSW, *Babu*, Safer Sex, Condom Usage, KAP, Kolkata.

The National AIDS Control Organization (2005), India's central AIDS monitoring agency, estimates that 2.9 million women or 1.1% of the adult women in the country are commercial sex workers (CSWs). Of these, 70,794 are estimated to be infected with HIV (NACO: Facts and Figures, 2003). Sexual behavior, characteristics of sexual partners, and knowledge and practices in the prevention of STIs, including HIV, among sexually active individuals play important roles in the transmission of infections (Arien *et al.*, 2005; Monasch & Mahy, 2006; Ray, Bala, Kumari, & Narain, 2005; Simon, Ho, & Abdool Karim, 2006). Commercial Sex workers and their clients (*babus*) are mostly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS epidemic. In fact, they are among the groups who have the highest prevalence of HIV infection (Davies *et al.*, 2007; Parrado, Flippen, & McQuiston, 2004). The main questions of research were:

- A. What are the factors that make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS?
- B. What are awareness, perceptions, practices & Knowledge about the HIV/AIDS, STD of the CSWs & the *babus*?
- C. What is reality of the Condom usage among the CSWs & the *babus*?
- D. What are the Myths & Misconceptions and felt problems among the CSWs & *babus*?
- E. What are the effects of intervention programmes to alter their behaviour change?

Since the early epidemic of HIV/AIDS, several studies examined the characteristics of female CSWs and their sexual behaviors, knowledge, and practice in the prevention of STIs and HIV to determine their role in the transmission and prevalence of the disease (Downe, 1997; Elifson, Boles, Darrow, & Sterk, 1999; Ryan *et al.*, 1998). The understanding of the clients (*Babu*), the men who had sex with female CSWs, is very significant in HIV/AIDS epidemic.

¹Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

²Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

Previous studies have estimated the risk of transmission between female CSWs and their male clients (*Babu*) and the risk of transmission between these men and their spouses or regular cohabiting partners (Johnson & Way, 2006; Ward et al., 2005). Thus an effective Behavior Change Communication has been carried out to ensure campaigns for different preventive measures. An understanding of sexuality and the social constructs influencing sexual relationships is crucial. But most campaigns, usually funded exclusively or jointly by external agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have tried to ensure greater condom compliance among CSWs by spreading awareness about its use and by increasing its availability (Jana, Basu, Rotheram-Borus, & Newman, 2004). Cultural factors and capabilities of target group members have been largely ignored (Jana *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, top-down models of campaigns traditionally manufacture and place messages in predetermined outlets without fostering opportunities for the participation of CSWs in determining the agenda, structure, and communicative choices of the campaign. This is true for HIV/AIDS-related health campaigns across the globe (Airhihenbuwa, Makinwa, & Obregon, 2000; Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000). Based on the culture-centered approach to health communication (Airhihenbuwa, 1995; Dutta & Basu, in press; Dutta-Bergman, 2004a, 2004b; Dutta-Bergman & Basu, 2007) qualitative data may be collected to analyze how interactive narratives of agency and resistance are enacted in the marginalized lives of sex workers.

METHODOLOGY

The work purposively selected fifty CSWs and twenty-two *Babus* aged <20 years to above 49 years in an adjoining urban settings at South 24 Parganas, just beside Kolkata metropolis. For the depth understanding of their work history, their sensitivity, awareness, knowledge and attitude towards STD/HIV&AIDS, myths and misconceptions about STD/HIV&AIDS, and behaviors/practices related to STD/HIV&AIDS the study used both tools of interviews and observation to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

'Safer sex', especially condom use is a crucial agenda, as it remains the most reliable method of prevention. As the approach is tilted towards mixed method approach (Steckler *et al.* 1992), data collection may be traditionally divided into quantitative and qualitative (Debus, 1986; Steckler *et al.*, 1992; Dootson, 1995). The respondents were selected purposively from the brothel area keeping in mind the best responsiveness and willingness of the participants of the insiders. Both structured (KABP Questionnaire) and semi-structured interviews were used for in-depth responses on various issues of STD/HIV&AIDS. Along with administrating the KABP Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (Debus, 1986) was conducted with the commercial sex workers and *babus* separately, to gather essential qualitative data. In-depth understanding is especially important in sexual behavior research. Sensitive issues such as condom use and the reasons for not using them can often be better explored in the more congenial environment of a focus group than by other methods. First step to start with the study was to take the written consent of the selected CSWs as well as *Babus* as per the selection criteria from "Red Light Areas" where they would be ensured about the confidentiality of their reported statements. The nature along with the objective of the study was explained to them. Then,

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the study was administered to the willing respondents individually by the interviewer. The questions were translated into the mother tongue of the participants by the researcher.

CHARACTERIZING THE SETTING

The setting of the female sex workers is very near to the main road with several lanes connecting it. The two *Paras* (neighborhoods) within which the brothel is situated are easily accessible to the clients. The place also provides space for the mobile behaviour of the sex workers to obtain a large number of clients by standing and walking at the outskirts of the brothel. However, regular conflicts among sex workers raise the complaints from other local residents to Police to restrain them from using the road. The brothel is also adjacent to river; many foreigners also visit the sex workers during their tours. There is a market surrounding the paras and houses are erected on both the sides of the sub lanes linearly. The sex workers use those houses, which consist of numerous small single rooms. Rooms are shabby, dark and least airy without any window. The only furniture visible in the rooms is a single bed full of dust and worn out materials. Most of sexworkers work and live in the same room; some sex workers have different occupations and living rooms for their family. Their families mostly are composed of their fixed partners called *babus*, children, sometimes father, mother and sister. The sex workers rent room from the landlord or landlady who are directly or indirectly involved with the sexwork. Some sex workers rent rooms on monthly basis. In many cases sex workers live and have her food in the same rented house; she has to give half of her daily income to the landlady, which is termed as “*adiya*” (meaning giving half of the income). The landlord or landlady also provides place to flying sex workers in the brothel and take money from them and they call it as “*ghuski*”. Within the brothel there is a hotel meant for sex trade which is run by a local entrepreneur; all the sexworkers are flying; they work over there in the hotel and return to their home regularly.

The ‘Red Light Areas’ present a grim reality—a vicious cycle of illegitimacy, disputes and violence that pervade the everyday life of the residents. In other words, sex workers are forced to internalize the everyday violence that defines the social rubric of their setting for living. The children of sex workers, born amidst squalor and neglect, also grow up to a harsh reality where they might easily resort to anti-social activities at a very young age to fend for themselves.

The several reported cases of violence and torture to the police have affected the lives of the sex workers adversely to the extent that extortions with local goons had coerced them into sexual encounters often resulting in serious physical injuries. Such youths or elderly persons are locally powerful, at times backed by one or more major political parties active in these areas. Landlords/ladies have also been identified as one of the resistant sub-groups in the brothel. Experiences from the field have revealed that some of the landlords also become moneylenders. In the process, they tend to exploit the women—majority of whom are illiterate. In some areas, landladies also exert pressure on their tenants to hand over the specific amount of rent. Apart from the external threats, the women are subjected also to physical and emotional violence met out to them by their live-in partners, better known as *babus* day in and day out.

Babus are the fixed partners of the individual sex workers for any time period. The sex workers treat them as so called “husbands” (*swami*), decision maker in the family, on whom sex workers try to depend. For *babu* she put vermilion on her head and if a *babu* dies or leaves her she stops putting the vermilion till another *babu* comes to her life. Most of the *babus* don’t go for work, though they identify themselves with some jobs; they rest within the brothel in association of other men, playing cards (*Jua*), consuming alcohol, drugs and live on the sex worker’s earning. To the sexworker *babus* are like life partners, want them to be with always. Contrary to the sustained tolerance and wish of any sex worker, she regularly passes through torture done by the *babus* both physically and mentally and ultimately *babu* leaves her any time. Again if another *babu* approaches her she easily holds his hand out of faith. *Babus* also provide assistance to the sexworkers to save her from the hands of local club boys, police, landlord or landlady.

Majority of such male partners are addicted to alcohol and other substances, whose expenses depend on the sex workers. They are also reluctant to use condoms on the pretext that it reduces sexual pleasure and have internalized the patriarchal dictatorship that a woman (even if she is a sex worker) should have complete faith in her male partner even when he indulges himself in risk behaviors. Reluctance to use condoms amongst the *babus* in turn, makes these women more vulnerable to unsafe sexual behaviors and practices.

Chronic alcoholism is a major problem amongst the primary target group. Around 66% commercial sex workers from the RLAs reported to have consumed alcohol either before or during their sexual encounter with the clients, which should be treated as a major deterrent to the efforts towards minimizing risk behaviors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE ASPECTS OF KABP INTERVIEWS

Community profile: The population in the area primarily consists of Bengalis along with few Non-Bengali families. Their livelihood is mainly dependent on small-scale entrepreneurship like selling vegetables in the market, tea/snacks stall and so on. Apart from this, most of the females manage their income from sex-trade. The target community is an admixture of people from various religions & cultures. Migration is quite common and a large number of flying sex-workers is frequent in the area. There are health facilities in the area.

Age: The half of the sex workers belongs to the age group of 20-30 years; however, 42% sex workers are of the age group of 31-49 years. But 8% of them are below 20 years. Ages of the *babus* vary from 19 years to 50 years. The majority of the respondents (12) are in the age range of 20-30 years and 8 in of 31-49 years. Only one respondent who was below 20 years and one was above 49 years.

Occupations: Majority of sex-worker respondents (94%=47) earns their livelihood from sex work. For majority of the sex workers (66%=32) monthly average income is Rs. 1000-3000, whereas 14%=7 of them are earning below Rs.1000 per month. Only few of them (18%=9) are earning above Rs. 5000 per month.

Among the *babus*, nearly half of (10=45%) the respondents are daily laborers, a few

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(5=23%) are hawkers, fewer are conductors (3=13%), rickshaw pullers (3=13%) and others earning from small business (2=11%). Average monthly income of the *babus* varies from Rs.1000 to Rs.4000, but majority of them (54%=27) earn in the range between Rs.1000 to Rs.2000 and 36% earn between Rs.2000 to Rs. 3000. only 1 person earns Rs. 4000.

Sexual Awareness, Perception and Practices: The findings of the KABP study is given below on different themes.

STD

- (a) 70% (=35) of the commercial sex workers know about STDs;
- (b) 58% (= 29) of the CSWs know that STDs are transmitted through sexual routes and the presence of sexually transmitted infections increases the chances of transmission of HIV.
- (c) Majority (55% = 27) of the CSWs know that STDs are spread through multiple sexual partners and by visiting CSWs and
- (d) 52% (=26) CSWs know that STD spreads more if one has sex with STD patient without condom.
- (e) 54% (=27) confirm using condom during sex prevents STDs and
- (f) 46% (=23) suggested early treatment of STDs.
- (g) 44% (=22) of CSWs speak about partner treatment and maintenance of proper health & hygiene can prevent STD.

Among the *babus*

- u. 57% (=28) of the respondents know about STDs;
- v. 30% (=15) of them are well aware of the STD symptoms.
- w. 32% (=16) and 27% (=13) of the respondents know about genital ulcer and urethral discharge respectively, whereas
- x. 31% (=15) of the people know about the itching sensation in the genitalia and burning sensation as important symptoms.
- y. Only 23% (=11) of the *babus* know about the genital warts.
- z. Those apart, 35% (=17) and 37% (=18) think that STD can be prevented through early treatment and partner treatment respectively.
- aa. 50% (=25) of the respondent *babus* say that maintaining proper health & hygiene also prevents STDs.
- bb. 70% (=35) of the *babus* know that STDs are transmitted through unsafe sexual practice with STD patients and
- cc. 25% (=12) respondents know that STDs spread through multiple sexual partners.

Intervention programme is run in the brothel for many years under West Bengal State AIDS Prevention & Control Society with paradigm shift from 'Community as a beneficiary' to the 'Community ownership approach'. Illiteracy is a major cause, which keeps most of the sex workers and *babus* ignorant of sexual and reproductive health issues although they heard of

the information, but they can hardly remember them; moreover their low self-esteem based on casual approach to sexual practices keeps them reluctant to such serious health issues.

HIV/AIDS

- (h) Only 58%=29 of the CSWs have the knowledge about HIV/AIDS,
- (i) 48% (=24) think that HIV leads to AIDS.
- (j) 58%=29 have the knowledge about the symptoms of AIDS.
- (k) Only 74%=37 of them have the idea that it could be prevented.
- (l) 70%=35 respondents said that HIV/AIDS is transmitted through unprotected sex.
- (m) 80%=40 of the CSWs know about VCTC,
- (n) 82%=41 of them had tested blood for HIV and knew where to do their HIV tests.

Among the *babus*,

- u. 62%=31 of the respondents know about HIV&AIDS.
- v. 50%=25 of *babus* know about the symptoms of AIDS.
- w. 42%=21 of the respondent *babus* knows that HIV spreads through unsafe sexual practice,
- x. Whereas 45%=22 and 18%=9 say that HIV spreads through blood transfusion and also from mother to child, respectively.
- y. Only 1 respondent knows about the transmission of HIV through unsterilized syringe.

Most of the CSWs and their *babus* have heard of HIV/AIDS, rather the term "HIV/AIDS" is very common to them, to many it is a matter of dread but the information they are getting about HIV/AIDS is hardly assimilated as knowledge. About VCTC most of them take it as a routine blood test for checking body as free of HIV.

Condoms

- (o) 44%=22 CSWs believed that condoms spoil sexual pleasure;
- (p) 10% =5 think that condoms are bad for health.
- (q) 40 %=20 among the *babus* think that if one has STD, it is better to use condom during all sexual encounters and it is also better to practice safer sex with the CSW.
- (r) 76%=38 of the CSWs say that they ask their partner to use condoms during all sexual encounters with clients,
- (s) but 24%=12 respondent say that using condom with *babu*/husband is not right and condom also spoils sexual pleasure.
- (t) 80%= 40 respondents (CSWs) say that they ask their sexual partner to use condom during all sexual encounter and
- (u) 74%=37 assert that there is a chances of contracting HIV/AIDS.
- (v) 80%=40 respondents use condom with their client during every sexual encounter whereas
- (w) only 37% =18 CSWs use condom with their regular partner.

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Among the *babus*

- u. 100 %=50 among the respondents (*babus*) practice vaginal sex though only 6%=3 practice anal and oral sex.
- v. Only 13%=6 practice non-penetrative sex.
- w. 38%=19 have undergone STD treatment on their own and
- x. 57%=28 have undergone VCTC test. 72%=36 among the respondent are addicted to alcohol and 54%=27 consume substance before sexual encounter. From the study, it was found that 23%=11 of the *babus* consistently uses condom with CSW and
- y. only 20%=10 use condom with their wives.

The data reveals that despite awareness about condoms, the use of condoms is still low; condom use with clients is more than with *babu*. Moreover some aged CSWs allow clients without condom in order to have money which makes them more vulnerable towards HIV/AIDS.

Sexual Acts

- (x) 88%=44 of the commercial sex workers perceive high risk of HIV transmission through unsafe peno-vaginal sex, whereas
- (y) only 12%=6 of them have responded that risk factor is low.
- (z) 66%=33 of the sex workers think, there is a high risk of HIV transmission in sexual encounter during menstruation with out condom as well;
- (aa) 34%=17of them have shown ignorance about the issue.
- u. The 70%=35 *babus* said that peno-vaginal sex without condom has high risk of HIV transmission but
- v. only 50%=25 have told that anal sex without condom has high risk.
- w. 44%=22 respondents said that sex during menstruation without condom has also high risk.

The result reveals that most of the CSWs are aware of the risk perception that they had to face while performing this risky sexual behavior. But in the case of *Babus*, majority of them are still unaware of safer sex practice, whatever the type of sex is. The lack of knowledge is making them more vulnerable to the infection and their sexual behavior, in turn, is putting them into higher risk.

From the study the myths and misconception have been found among the 50 CSWs are like in,

Transmission of HIV

- (bb) only 22%=11 still believe HIV could be transmitted through mosquito bites,
- (cc) 6% believe that HIV/AIDS could spread by touching and sharing clothes & food.
- (dd) Only 2%=1 believe that a healthy looking person can be a PLWHA. From the KABP study, very low amount of myths and misconception have been found among *babus*.
- (ee) 18%=9 respondent thought that HIV could spread through mosquito bites and
- (ff) 13%=6 said that HIV could spread through CSW only.

(gg) 9%=4 have idea that HIV could spread through using utensils and clothes of PLHA.

(hh) 15%=7 thought that HIV could spread through the use of a common bathroom.

Thus Myths and Misconceptions seem to be having amongst the CSW and their *Babus*. Repetitive emphasis on routes of transmission of HIV /AIDS might dispel these misconceptions. But due to the lack of proper STI and HIV/AIDS knowledge amongst the target community leads to the presence of myths and misconceptions.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AMONG THE CSWS AND *BABUS*

Two focus group discussions were conducted, each of which consisted of seven members of female sex workers and their *babus*, if available and who are acceptable by all members. The focus was on their ways of living with dependence on *babus* and a few significant issues of earning from other regular clients, especially regarding safer sex practice, their health problems and available health services. The major agreements emerged as follows:

1. They have some sustaining health complaints, for which they usually take resort to their community health clinics, not outside. Two typical statements may be quoted. Rekha says,

“My lower abdominal pain associated with white discharge seems to be the effect of trouble in abdomen which can be reduced by cooling of abdomen”.

Minati, a sex worker stated,

“In most of the cases we come to the brothel clinic and rarely do we visit other doctor outside brothel. Earlier we used to hesitate to visit the STD clinic but after our friends are working in the clinic we are coming here for doctor consultation also other than with STD problems.”

2. They face persistent problems of using condoms with the male clients, though they are becoming increasingly rigid about the usage of the condoms. Rahima states,

“We use condom with all of our clients on a regular basis in every sexual encounter, but many of us don't use it with our *babus* because if *babus* are asked to use condom they often beat us. There remains a problem of misunderstanding as if we are having doubts on them.”

3. They are much vulnerable to the desire of their *babus* for they really can't deny their deeply felt lack of support in the male-dominated society. They judge it better to submit to the *babus*, even if they may not be happy with them at all.

Sabita says,

“To us *babus* are like husbands and we cannot ignore their saying, our family has left us, society ignores our identity and has labeled us as “besya”, only *babus* remain with us gives our children and a family of our own. Although we are being tortured by glowing cigarette strands or being beaten severely but the pain is comparatively low where ones existence is at stake.”

Minu narrates,

“Now we don't allow clients without condom but aged are also here who receive clients without condoms as otherwise they will not get a client. Condom is usually less pleasurable. Regarding STDs we don't have any problem to visit clinic; our peers are over there; they also visit us. Thus sharing and communication of such health services has become much easier than before, but some others also find some difficulty of sharing during a tussle or in conditions out of balance after consuming alcohol a little more than usual.”

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The discussion with *babus* reveals their experience of living a sort of conjugal life with the individual sex workers:

“I force her to use condom with all the clients, even I ask to keep the condoms which I check after returning from my work and if I found some mistakes in using condom I beat her severely. But I myself don’t use condoms, before I tried sometimes but I am not satisfied with it.”

“My partner don’t want me to use condom, we also don’t like to use it. Even sometimes we use them, but condoms often get burst.”

“We remain in a tussle being using it as my partner misunderstood me of having sex with some other woman or so.”

To a respondent *babu* STD symptoms appeared less important than his work; he hardly has any time to visit the clinic but it is easily accessible by all.

CONCLUSION

Thus there is a need for further implementation of Behavior Change and Communication strategies to cover the entire population of young and old Commercial Sex Workers since always newly joining sex workers to the “Red Light Areas” along with their clients and *babus* need to be addressed. Both the CSWs and *Babus* are not regularly using condoms with their regular partners; for that they suffer from recurrent STD problems. Partner notification along with the counseling on benefits of consistent condom use also need to develop negotiation skill among the Commercial Sex Workers. It also needs to be addressed in order to treat both the nonregular and regular partner. Mass education as well as more effective empowerment is needed for the most affected population of the *babus* as well as Commercial Sex Workers. They have got information on STD, HIV/AIDS but they are not turned out to be the knowledge of their culture to empower their lives.

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TRACKING THE DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY OF THE TRUCKERS: A STUDY ON THE LONG-DISTANCE TRUCKERS FROM FOUR PROVINCES OF INDIA

Suman Hazra¹, Arnab Das², Snehasish Raul³, Suchandrima Sen³, Soumi Dey⁴, Subha Ray⁵, Debabrata Saha⁶ and Kaberi Chakrabarti⁷

Abstract: This focused study on sexual health is done on one hundred purposively sampled long-distance truckers from two large truck terminals of Howrah, the city just beside Kolkata metropolis in West Bengal. The sexual perceptions, awareness, attitudes and practices of the truckers, residentially identified with north and eastern provinces of India, were studied by mixed approach ethnography. The six month fieldwork involved mainly case studies, depth and semi-structured interviews for obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data on several issues of sexuality. The study could gather the glimpses of essential relationship between the culture of sexuality of the truckers and the intervention programmes to protect the 'high-risk' population from STDs and HIV/AIDS. The outcomes of the above two governing forces of sexual behaviour and health of the truckers, who stay away from families for long periods, are still far away from the bay of success. The observed consequences owe both to the inadequately receptive culture socialising the truckers about sexuality and to the incompatibility of the directions of the intervention programmes to the existing milieu in which the truckers live.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, Sexuality, Behaviour, Practice, Attitude, Truckers, Ethnography.

This is a formative study to understand and to report the sexuality and related dimensions of sexual health of the long-distance truckers, all from four northern and eastern provinces of India, available at two big truck terminals of Howrah, the city just beside Kolkata metropolis in West Bengal.

TRUCKERS AND HIV/AIDS IN INDIA

While in India long-distance truck drivers have long been implicated in the spread of HIV (Tanne, 1991; Bansal, 1992; McDonald, 1992; Singh *et al.*, 1993; Rao *et al.*, 1994; Singh and Malviya, 1994; Misra *et al.* 1996; Bansal and Nia, 1998) and since a long time treated as comprising a significant 'high-risk' group (Singh *et al.*, 1993; Singh and Malviya, 1994, Rao *et al.*, 1994) with respect to HIV/AIDS. Truckers have been the subjects of a great deal of attention as far as HIV is concerned. One reason is simply that there are so many of the long-distance truckers: in India for example, it is estimated that two to five million people are long-distance

¹Research Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

²Selection Grade Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Calcutta

³Project Fellow, UGC-UPE Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

⁴Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET) of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

⁵Reader, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

⁶Physician and Independent Researcher

⁷Selection Grade Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta

truck drivers and helpers (IOM, 2005). Many other significant sources support such a figure¹. In 1999, phase II of the National AIDS Control Program (NACP-II) initiated with aims to conduct interventions among high-risk groups comprising of truck drivers. It is only in 1999 that the National AIDS Control Policy (1999-2004) recognized AIDS as not "merely a public health challenge," but also a political and social development issue. NACP III also clearly suggests,

"A central strategy of India's National AIDS Control Programme III (NACP III) is to reduce sexual transmission of HIV within high-risk sexual networks, and from these high-risk networks into the general population. Accordingly, NACP III prioritizes HIV prevention among truckers as a key programme component."² and

"...Given an estimated HIV prevalence of 11.16% among long-distance truckers in India, there could be an estimated 0.6-0.7 million HIV positive truckers by 2005 figures."³

Along with the above, the guidelines emphasise on the factors affecting their risk-taking behaviour either in their less effective perception of risks in unsafe sex or in their indifference to action to protect themselves from the vulnerability to STI, STD and HIV/AIDS.⁴ It adds that reaching truckers with effective HIV prevention programmes and services is important for many reasons⁵, central to which are the comparatively higher frequency of being clients to

¹The Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD) gives a figure of around 5 million truck drivers in India. This estimate is based on the assumption that there are about 2.5 million trucks in the country and that each truck has two drivers. Similarly, the report of a study by the Indian Institute of Health Management Research quotes a figure of about 5-6 million truckers (i.e. truck drivers and other crew members) in India.

²http://www.nacoonline.org/About_NACO/Policy_Guidelines/Policies_Guidelines_Table_for_download/, 28 Targeted Interventions for Truckers—Operational Guidelines, 1.1

³http://www.nacoonline.org/About_NACO/Policy_Guidelines/Policies_Guidelines_Table_for_download/, 28 Targeted Interventions for Truckers—Operational Guidelines, 1.2

⁴The factors affecting truckers' risk-taking behaviour are varied, but are important in understanding the overall vulnerability of truckers to HIV. The harsh working conditions of truckers, including the risk of injuries, robbery, attacks and destruction of their vehicles, clearly contribute to their low perceptions of the seriousness of HIV infection. While the level of knowledge among truckers related to STIs and HIV/AIDS is relatively high, this knowledge is rarely converted into action. Lack of concern for self and a false sense of security due to improper understanding or interpretation of information about HIV/AIDS lead to risky behaviour. Ibid. 1.3

⁵Ibid. 1.1.

- Evidence in India and elsewhere shows that the community of truckers is vulnerable to HIV due to a higher prevalence of risky sexual behaviour, which results from a variety of social and economic factors as well as their work patterns.
- Reportedly, close to 36% of truckers are clients of sex workers and 15-20% of clients appear to be truckers. Therefore, truckers represent a key "sub-segment" of the total male client population.
- Because long-distance truckers move throughout the country, those who are at higher risk of HIV can form transmission "bridges" from areas of higher prevalence to those of lower prevalence.

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the sex workers, their mobility from highly HIV prevalent zone to the other zones of the country and longer stay-away from spouse and family. The Government of India estimates that in 2006, about 2.45 million Indians were living with HIV (1.75-3.15 million) with an adult prevalence rate of 0.41% (<http://www.worldbank.org/>). Heterosexual contact and drug use (UNAIDS and WHO, 1997) as two routes of transmission found sex workers in India with high rates of HIV prevalence (Brewer, 1995; NACO, 1996; Nag, 1996). The female and male sex workers and other MSM males were identified the high-risk groups (Thomas, 1994; Nag, 1996; Basu, Gupta and Krishna, 1997; NACO, 2001). Their clients, who diffuse the disease widely, include truck drivers, among others (Nag, 1996), who travel long separated from families (Arnold 1997), not only from different parts of India but also from Bangladesh and Nepal (Ehrlich, 1996; Paul and Hasnath, 2000) and Pakistan (Agha, 2002). In Kolkata at 1999, the prevalence rate of HIV among STD patients was more than 2% and HIV prevalence was 3.5% (UNAIDS and WHO, 2000). Even a recent study showed that nearly one third of the long-distance truckers had paid for sex in the past twelve months (Pandey, A *et al.*, 2008).

Thus, the truckers act as bridge between high and low prevalence communities and geographical areas. Their contact with their families is not for a protracted period of time, but during these interactions they share common aspirations such as having children and leading a normal family life. However, the nature of their profession and the stresses associated with long periods of travel and being away from family for prolonged stretches of time can result in truckers and cleaners/helpers indulging in risky behaviour with regard to HIV/AIDS.

SEXUALITY, ANTHROPOLOGY, HIV/AIDS AND THE APPROACH

In social and cultural anthropology, there has been a significant increase in studies on sexuality since the early 1980s (Davis & Whitten, 1987). The diverse global changes extending the impacts to the local social norms, to some specific gender movements, the impact of the emerging HIV/AIDS pandemic and growing concern with cross-cultural dimensions of reproductive and sexual health (Parker & Gagnon, 1995) might be some of the reasons of the most innovative and creative fields of contemporary anthropological research and a series of important opportunities and challenges for interdisciplinary sex research. The present work is broadly motivated by the similar concern of study. Sexuality had traditionally been understood in general medical and natural science terms, which could rarely allow individual and cultural specification. Development in qualitative research on sexuality, critical analysis of the categories used and the growth of concepts dealing with comparisons of sexuality between cultures and within cultures offer reproductive and public health programs a considerable improved chance of success. Across cultures commitment to the social and cultural study of sexuality and/ or gender brought together scholars from varied disciplines. Culture, however, points to the most significant source, among many sources, of difference and variation of sexuality at the various locations of the world. (Eder, Hall and Hekma eds, 1999; Middleton, 2002). Sexual health, far from being merely the absence of disease or dysfunction, is a vital and essential part of being human. The Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organization (2000) recently defined sexual health as “the experience of the ongoing process

of physical, psychological and sociocultural well being related to sexuality." Health Canada's 1999 Report from Consultations on a Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health has asserted as a guiding principle that all individuals are sexual beings throughout their lives, and this is the broad approach taken here in considering issues in Canadian women's sexual health. "Sexual health is defined as the enhancement of life and personal relations, and sexual health services should not consist merely of counseling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases".

Two major theoretical models on the relationship between anthropology, sexuality and sexual behaviour research may be explored (Vance, 1991), though there are some efforts of combining the two extreme grounds of understanding. The first arising from studies and movements peripheral to traditional anthropological studies, "social construction theory", the notion that sexuality is constructed differently across cultures and over time, based on a varied body of research, including such fields as history, Marxism, gender studies, cross-cultural research on sexuality, labeling theory and deviance, and feminism. Vance (1991) cautioned that the category of "social construction" has several connotations in regards to sexuality research, but that, in general, social construction theory challenges essentialist notions about sexuality. The existence of cross-cultural variation contradicts the notion of universal gender roles and uniform female sexuality. This attention to the cultural variability of gender roles inspired an analytical reconfiguration of the categories of sexuality and gender, fueled by the struggle for reproductive rights. (Gordon, 1973, 1976). The turbulence of HIV/AIDS pandemic over the 1990s involves much of the social research on sexual behaviour drawn on the research methods of anthropology (Berridge, 1992; Fee & Fox, 1989). Social, cultural, and behavioural issues associated with sexual practices and risks, the meanings of "risk", the communities and subcultures, (for example of the truck drivers), changes in organization, orientation, and identity are the areas in which anthropological perspectives were found valuable (Bolton & Singer, 1992; Brummelhuis & Herdt, 1995; Feldman, 1990; Herdt & Lindenbaum, 1992). In contrast to earlier insufficient attention to women's lives particularly in developing countries (Patton, 1994), the "gendering" of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Roth and Hogan, 1998; Wilton, 1997) argued that in health education and health promotion, class, gender, race, age, ethnicity, disability, and nationality all have profound impact on how individuals see themselves, and relate to sexuality, even in shifting manners and contexts. In addition to the existing scenario, the HIV/AIDS pandemic that began to emerge in the early 1980s has proven to be a major catalyst for sexuality research and social construction theory (Vance, 1991; Herdt & Lindenbaum, 1992; Parker & Gagnon, 1995). The practical demands of analyzing and responding to the pandemic have provided a major stimulus for social constructionist approaches in anthropology and related disciplines, as cross-cultural data have increasingly been used to deconstruct accepted notions of sexual conduct (Herdt & Lindenbaum, 1992). Need of insider's/"experience-near" view of culture: Therefore, special emphasis was seen in analyzing the cultural categories and systems of classification that structure and define sexual experience in different social and cultural contexts (Parker, 1991, 1994; Parker, Herdt, & Carballo, 1991). By focusing more carefully on local categories and classifications, researchers have thus increasingly sought to

Tracking the Dimensions of Sexuality of the Truckers

move from what, in anthropology or linguistics, might be described as an “outsider” perspective to what is described as an “insider” perspective—from the “experience-distant” concepts of science to the “experience-near” concepts that the members of specific cultures use to understand and interpret their own reality (see Geertz, 1983; Parker, 1989, 1991, 1994).

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

Till the end of the last century there were not many published reports on long-distance truck driver sexual cultures in India (Rao et al. 1994; Rao, Pilli et al. 1999) as well. However, any exclusion, moral judgments of the facts and excluded prevention interventions and care are not recommended for promoting the healthy conditions of any section of the most-at risk population like the highly mobile workers of India (NACO, 2005; UNGASS India report, 2006). The issue of this particular occupational group needs to be explored ethnographic sensitivity (Stratford et al. 2000). Both XVI and XVII International AIDS Conference on 2006 and 2008 respectively came out with many findings on the intervention programmes on the HIV/AIDS issues of the truckers, their effects, problems and consequences. Basically the questions of stigma, discrimination, exclusion, (UNAIDS, 2001; Mahendra, 2006; Khakha, 2003; Nyblade, et al. 2009) etc. cropped up as major barriers to proper availability of health services, effective action of those in the health services and other stakeholders associated with truckers’ lives. The research efforts are more concerned in practicable effectiveness (Deodhar, 2003). The campaigns took some shifts of focus⁶. There are signs of success of some efforts to prevent HIV among truck drivers may be exemplified by a recent survey of truck drivers in Tamil Nadu—carried out after an HIV prevention program. It found that the proportion of drivers, who reported engaging in commercial sex declined from 14% in 1996 to 2% in 2003. Of those who did report having commercial sex, the proportion that had not used a condom the last time they did so fell from 45% to 9%. (UNAIDS, 2006).

The social vulnerabilities to contracting HIV infection and developing AIDS encompass poverty, illiteracy and stigma and discrimination. Since the last decade and a half, the nation has made significant attempts to halt the spread of the infection. Yet, HIV/AIDS continues to be one of the most complex epidemics, which is linked closely and is continuously reflected in various health and socio-cultural issues.

The objectives of this study stand:

1. To get access to the depth of perception, attitudes and practices about sexual health among the long-distance truckers of northern and eastern provinces of India;

⁶“Tape the cards for high-risk groups (e.g. sex workers, truck drivers) on the wall and explain: There are an estimated 53 million people in India living with HIV, including 200,000 sex workers and 175,000 truckers. This means 52,620,000 people who are not sex workers or truckers have HIV. HIV is now affecting the general population, not just high-risk groups. We cannot continue to blame sex workers and truckers as if they are the only people with HIV—they are only a small fraction of those with HIV.” (Chapter C: Shame and Blame—Stigma & Emotional Violence. Kid *et al.* 2007: pg 108)

2. To determine the level of HIV/AIDS awareness and practice of risky behaviours among them;
3. To understand the effects of prevention activities on the truckers that might communicate support the safer sex practices;
4. To inform socialisation of sexuality in the culture;.
5. To know the scenario and constructs of obtaining information on sexual health.

PLAN AND METHODS

Therefore, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to attain a construct of sexual practices and perceptions appeared to be need of the hour. The use of qualitative data to supplement semi-structured interviews has been done successfully in studies of the sexual behaviour of truck drivers and migrant labourers since a long time (Orubuloye et al. 1993, Rao et al. 1994). The design of qualitative research depends heavily on the goals of a given project (Strauss, 1987). A range of different methods is available, and researchers need to formulate a strategy for implementing these methods according to the goals of the project and the setting of the research (Bernard, 1988; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Strauss, 1987).

The study of sexual culture raises a series of specific issues that are perhaps distinct from those that would emerge in the study of other cultural domains. The most useful methods and the ways in which they can be most effectively implemented in the design of research on sexual culture in relation to HIV transmission and AIDS (Parker & Carballo, 1990) are given below.

The appropriate method of the present research is the Mixed Method Approach in Ethnography. It is the method, in which both quantitative and qualitative approach are used for both generalization and detailed view of the phenomenon. This method is fulfilled by-

1. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data,
2. Developing a rationale for mixing, which has already been assumed.

This involves-

1. Both predetermined and emerging methods,
2. Both open- and closed-ended questions,
3. Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities.

Qualitative and quantitative behavioral researches are more than complementary. The first allows us to gain deeper understanding of human behavior and its determinants, while the latter permits us to assess that behavior and its consequences. To be effective AIDS programs should combine both quantitative and qualitative research methods for following reasons-

1. The best of all available methods can be utilized jointly.
2. More data can be double-checked and verified.
3. Data may be more easily analyzed when comparing information gathered by different methods.

Tracking the Dimensions of Sexuality of the Truckers

The useful techniques of the research were-

1. Face-to-face interview technique
2. Observation
3. Case study
4. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

This study examines peoples' current knowledge, attitudes and practices with regard to HIV/AIDS, STDs, and various sexual practices among truckers and their cleaners/helpers at Dhulagarh and Kona, in the District of Howrah, West Bengal, India.

The Sexual Practices of the Truckers: In the surrounding regions of the fieldwork, there are several brothels, peopled by the rural women, at Domjur, Sankrail, Rajganj and Jangalpur around the truck stops and the industrial complexes of Kona and Dhulagarh. Free-floating female sex workers (called “randi”) also make themselves available to truck drivers at the stands. Some sex workers also wait for drivers on highways outside the cities. After having sex with them, drivers drop them at next stops. However, because of lack of free time available during their busy schedule most truckers do not visit “lucrative brothels” like Sonagachi but instead engage the services of free-floating sex workers. Sex also occurs between drivers and their helpers and between drivers. Younger helpers are expected or sometimes forced to provide sexual services to truck drivers.

The fieldwork was prepared from January 2009 to June 2009. Less time was allotted for the fieldwork so it was done little quickly. In that time I visited several times at my three field sites either for getting permission or for doing fieldwork.

The Selection: Non-probability sampling method was used, in which members are selected from the population in some nonrandom manner. Purposive sampling was most suitable for my research. About 140 truckers were interviewed face-to-face between February and June 2008 for a study on the targeted population in Kona and Dhulagarh. A representative quota of 100 truckers according to their themes of “a profile of the population” below in proportion to the sampled interviews is presented in the analysis. Among the 140 respondent truckers nearly one-fourth had to leave the terminals in the midway of the interview. The study was conducted at the participants' work places or resting places. Criteria for inclusion in the study was

1. The participant's wish to participation in interview,
2. A basic level of maturity with regard to answering sexually related questions and
3. The ability to communicate with one another.

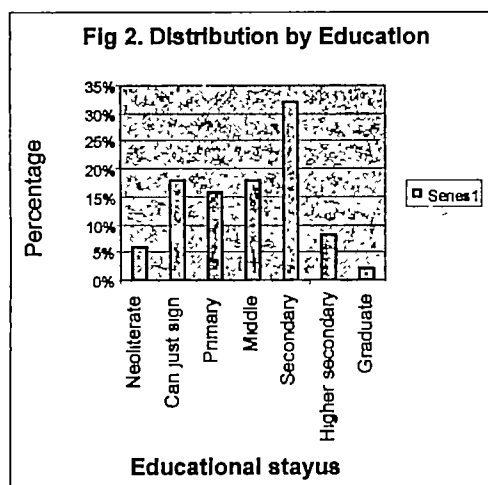
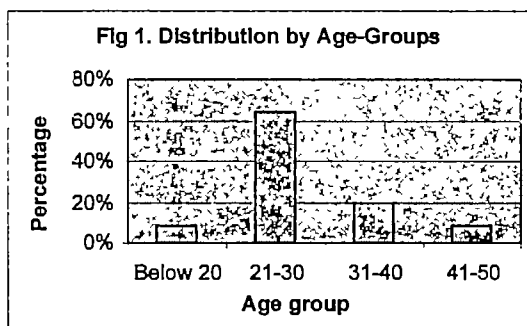
The Setting: Dhulagarh and Kona are two suburb situated beside the NH-06, Howrah. These two places are mainly industrial place. Many big industrial complexes like Jalan Complex (1, 2, 3, 4), Bengal Ambuja Cement Factory, Food perk, Pepsico India Ltd and other medium to large scale factories are located here. West Bengal's two of the biggest truck terminals viz- Kona Truck Terminal, and Bhulagarh Truck Terminal are also situated here.

Data and information collected from the following sites:

1. Howrah Truck Terminal, KSONA;
2. Bengal Ambuja Cement Factory, Dhulagarh;
3. A local dhaba and associated perking lot at Dhulagarh.

A PROFILE OF THE POPULATION

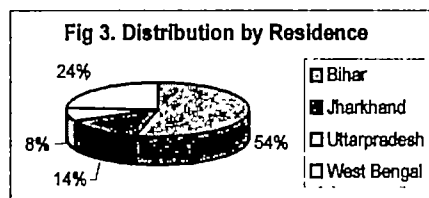
Age distribution : The age groups (Fig. 1.) of the respondents ranged from 18 to 50 years. Majority of the respondents were between the age group of 21-30. 8% of the respondents fell into the below 20 year old age group; 64% into the 21-30 group; 20% into the 31-40 year old age group and 8% into the 41-50 year old age group.



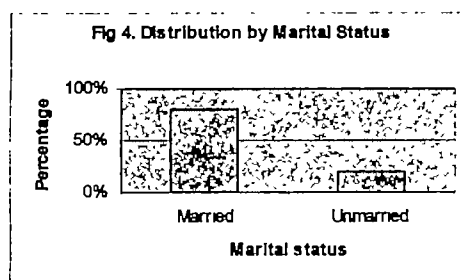
Educational attainment : Figure 2. explains that only 10% completed high school. A large number, 32% reported to have passed secondary (10 standard) level. Literate below that level comprises 52% (18% of the respondents had dropped out when they were at middle school. 16% of them had only primary education. 18% of the respondents were just literate) followed by 6% as neo-literate and above secondary is 10%, Only two had graduate degree.

The main reasons of leaving the study in half way include poverty, unwillingness to study and social pressure of earning.

Residence (by Provinces) : Around 54% of the respondents were from Bihar, 14% respondents reported their state of residence to be Uttarpradesh. Very few respondents were from Jharkhand (8%). There were also 24% respondents of West Bengal.



Marital status and age at marriage : About 80% of the respondents reported that



they were married. Overall, about 20% of the respondents were unmarried. No widowed, divorced or separated truckers were found. In all, 72% respondents reported having children.

The age at which people marry can be a significant indicator for span of time available for family planning

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and parenting their children after marriage. A significant section of the respondents (40%) reported early child marriage. They reason behind the early marriage was cultural tradition. All other respondents (60%) reported their marriage age between 22-30 years.

Time spent in principal occupation : All respondents reported trucking to be their main occupation. Among the 100 respondents 88 (88%) were truck drivers. Only 12 (12%) were helpers. According to the respondents except the general cause of seeking livelihood, the reasons for choosing of this occupation were desire for driving, faith on driving, family connection or engagement of friends to this occupation and wish for more income.

All respondents had spent at least one year in their present occupation. About 20% percent had been in their current occupation from one to five years. However 60 % of the respondents had been in their present occupation of trucking from six to 15 years. The rest 20 % truckers engaged more than 16 years in their occupation.

Average time spent away from family : As a consequence of long distances traveled, a large proportion of respondents spent several months at a stretch away from home.

64% of respondents spent about two to six months away from home. Their interval of home visit was not fixed, sometimes it exceeded to six-seven months also. In contrast, very few visit home frequently. 12% of them spent away from home about one year to one and half years. Only 24% respondents visited home once in a week, because they were all residents of West Bengal and most of the time travelling within the state. A longer time and a greater distance spent away from home might mean higher chances for indulging in risky sexual behaviour.

Average distance travelled and halting points : Most of the respondents (76%) travelled long distances of over 500 kilometres Per trip. Only about 24% of the respondents in had travelled distance less than 500 kilometres per trip, for confining the travel within and around West Bengal. Many of them had national permit and travelled over 2,000 kilometres. on one trip.

Therefore, questions were also asked on truck halting points, which might serve as places for

Fig 5. Distribution by Occupational Status

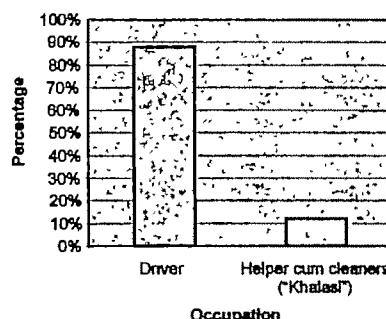


Fig 6. Distribution of Time away from Home

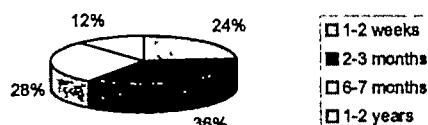
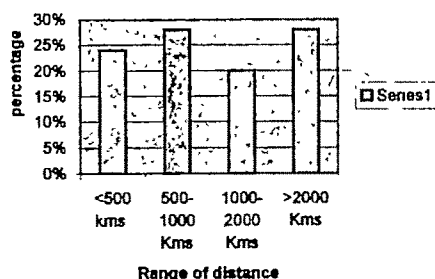


Fig 7. Distribution of Average Distance Travelled



meeting sexual partners, and therefore as areas where information, education and communication about sexual health programmes could be initiated. Most of the respondents (98%) stated that their regular halting points were roadside eating joints (Dhabas). However, a large proportion of respondents (82%) stated truck loading and unloading points to be their halting points. A similar proportion of respondents (76%) stated that they halted at petrol pumps or service stations. In contrast some halted at the truck terminals due costly rate.

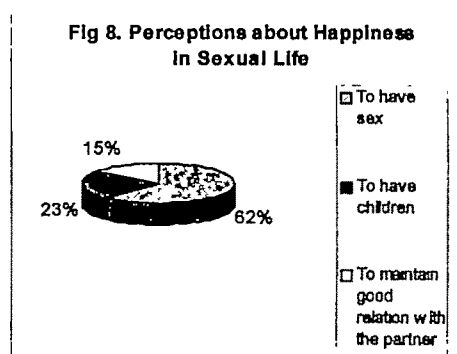
Table-1. Distance Travelled and Halting Points

Distance travelled Range of distance	Percentage
<500 kms	24%
500-1000 Kms	28%
1000-2000 Kms	20%
>2000 Kms	28%
Halting Points during Trips (multiple response) Halting points	Percentage
Dhaba (road side eating joint)	96%
Loading/Unloading point,	84%
Petrol pump/Service station	78%
Truck terminal	54%

SEXUALITY AND HEALTH : PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

Gender, appearance and expenditure for sexual Pleasure : All respondents reported that they always prefer women as the sexual partner. According to them the physical criteria they recognized for selecting sexual partner were as such- beautiful, healthy figure and no way with 'faults' in body. For attraction to any woman they never felt the distance of standards of livelihood would matter, but all of them confirmed the standards, except for love, even in 'buying sex' were found to matter.

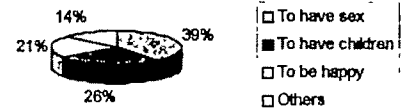
Perception about happiness in conjugal life : Most of them highlighted on the followings; according to the individual priority the responses may be set forth: a) to have children, b) to maintain good relation with the partner, c) to have sex. To have sex as the perception about happiness in their sexual life were mostly perceived by truckers (62%). They next reported to have children (23%) followed by to maintain good relation with the partner (15%).



Tracking the Dimensions of Sexuality of the Truckers

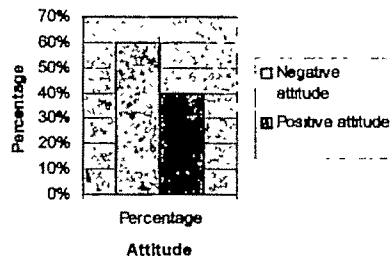
Expectation from marriage : According to the respondent's own priority the counts stand as to have sex (39%) followed by to have children (26%) and to be happy (21%). Other responses (14%) included for parents' will and for responsibility to the family.

Fig 9. Expectation from Marriage



Perception regarding multiple sexual partnerships : In

Fig 10. Perceptions about Polygamy



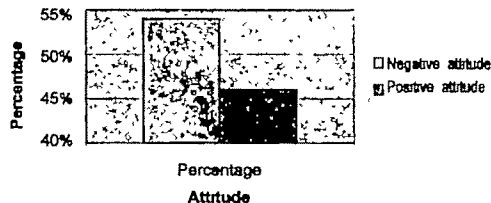
a unanimous fashion, 60% of the respondents showed their negative attitudes towards multiple sexual partnerships. The reasons for their oblique attitudes were sought and a different pattern of response became evident among them. They opposed it, as they perceived,

- "We would have bad reputation";
- "we might have sexual diseases";
- "it is a sin";
- "life will not be peaceful" and
- "anti-social act".

The rest of my respondents (40%) showed a positive attitude to the multiple sexual partnership. because all of them had multiple sexual relationships. They gave the explanations for their support of that attitude as "its only for enjoyment and pleasure", and "we are separated from our families so we have to satisfy our undeniable urge".

Attitude towards pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationship : Sexual relationship

Fig 11. Attitude towards Pre and Extramarital Relations

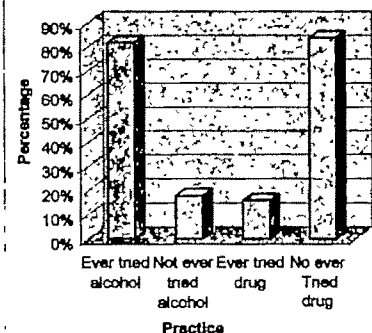


before marriage or even after marriage with somebody other than spouse is not socially accepted, but it was not strongly reflected from the responses. A large portion (46%) showed positive attitude to the pre- and extramarital relations with the following thoughts like-"Life is all about enjoyment"; "who cares society's rule"; "these relations are very much situation specific" and "its

my own life". Many of the respondents (54%) showed negative attitude and as reason they thought as the following- "bad thing to do; "will have bad reputation"; "not accepted in society"; "will not get married" and "can result AIDS".

Alcohol consumption : Around 82% of the respondents had consumed alcohol at least once. Among those who ever had alcohol, daily consumption was low but weekly consumption was high. Very few of them stated that they drank occasionally. About one third of the respondents reported that they drank before having sex for more pleasure, while half of the respondents stated that they never drank before indulging in sexual acts.

Fig 12. Instance of Alcohol and Drug Use



Drug Use : Many respondents said they knew someone who used drugs as well as knew people who injected drugs. When asked about their own personal use of drugs, 16% respondents replied affirmatively. The most common drug consumed by the target group was Marijuana (Ganja), while the other commonly consumed drug was Bhang. However, respondents did not consume other addictive and harmful drugs, like, Cannabis (Charas), Opium and Heroin.

Table-2. Alcohol and drug consumption

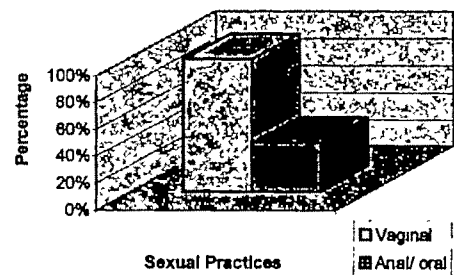
Alcohol consumption		
Practice	No. of respondents	Percentage
Ever tried alcohol	82	82%
Not ever tried alcohol	18	18%
Drug consumption		
Ever tried drug	16	16%
No ever tried alcohol	84	84%

Penetrative sexual practices : Almost all the respondents (98%) have ever had sex with female partners. Only two reported never to have it. Truckers began having sexual relations, on average, at the age of 15-16 years. The most frequently mentioned first sexual partner was a female friend or casual acquaintance.

Of the total population studied, all the respondents reported a preference for vaginal sexual acts. The reasons for preferring vaginal sex were as such "its natural", its right" and "its comfortable". 36% of them ever tried oral or anal sex. Few of them indulged into anal and oral sex for curiosity or desire for doing the same after watching such sexual acts in pornography. Majority of them reported that they disliked anal or oral sex because of initial "shyness" and "immaturity". A few also continued these sexual activities with either their regular or non-regular partners. Majority of them practiced masturbation (96%) at young age. A significant number of those interviewees (24%) said that they used alcohol or drugs prior to having sexual activities to increase sexual urge or more enjoyment. One also reported that alcohol was mandatory for visiting commercial sexual workers.

Sexual partnership : Almost all (98%), except two, have ever had sex with female partners in their life. About 16% of them reported they ever had sex with one and regular sex partner in life. Rest (82%) reported that they had sex with non-regular partners at least once till date.

Fig 13. Penetrative Sexual Practices of Respondents



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For most of them their non-regular sex partner was either a commercial sex worker or a girl friend whom either they did not get married or was a casual sex partner.

At the time of the study, 80% of the truckers said that they lived with their wife or spouse. A significant proportion (44%) of married respondents had sexual relations with either girl friend or casual acquaintance at their young age but after marriage they had no relation with them. 72% truckers, who live with their wives, went at least once for sex outside marriage. Moreover 32% of married truckers had sex with sex workers and 24% of them had more than one non-regular sexual partner.

Among the 20 unmarried truckers 12 visited commercial sex workers regularly. At youth some of them also had sexual relations with their girlfriends. Only 4 unmarried respondents had simultaneous sexual relations with both girl friends and sex workers. Four of them ever had sexual relations with a male partner.

Sexual relation with sex workers : About 44% of truckers have ever paid to have sex with a woman. More respondents in the age group of 18-39 years had sex with non-regular partners. The trend in terms of age and number of non-regular sexual partners shows that with increasing age, there are a fewer numbers of such partners. Respondents would usually seek CSW from brothel, sex network and roadside. The place where respondents would indulge in sexual activity reported as brothel, roadside dhaba, their own trucks and hotels. The reported causes of their sexual relations with commercial sex workers.

(a) their long time separation from their wife and family,

(b) for refreshment of mind because of seeking some relief from heavy duty work.

No respondent reported engaging in sex with non-regular partners when they spent only a week or a fortnight away from home. All of the respondents would have non-regular sex partner/s when they would be away for at least about a month. Since most respondents reported having sex with non-regular partners during their travels, the length of time spent away from their families influences their sexual behaviour.

Sexual relation with male partners : Altogether, about 4%, four in number, of the respondents could express that they ever had sex (manual/oral/anal) with a male partner. Most respondents who had male-to-male sex said that they were about less than 20 years old when they first

Fig 14. Sexual Partnership of Respondents

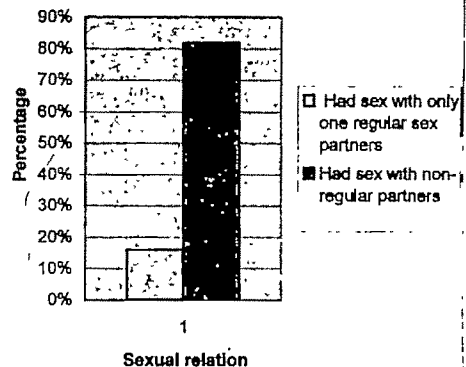
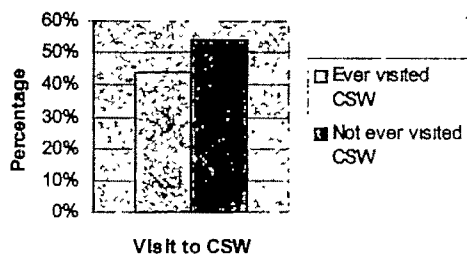


Fig 15. Distribution by Sexual relation with CSW



experienced it. In the first case the partner was driver, who somewhat forced him into the act, while he was a helper. It gradually indulged in sexual relations. In the second case, the respondent and one of his co-helpers had sex between them with mutual consent after watching pornography in mobile phone. Both of them reported to avoid the habit because of pain during anal sexual activity. The other two had a few initial MSM exposures before the entry into the occupation, but with the co-truckers they had been doing the same occasionally. They expressed that same-sex sexuality is more rampant than the truckers might report it. There were some other respondents, who remained silent about the answers indicating the possibility of such practices. It is reported that the truckers of Bihar and a few of north-western provinces are more engaged in that sexual practice.

Knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) : Awareness of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) was particularly low among the respondents. 68% the respondents had ever heard of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many of them (32%) not had ever heard about these diseases. Among those who were aware of STDs only 48 truckers had some knowledge about its transmission. Only 48 (48%) truckers knew that STDs could be prevented and cured.

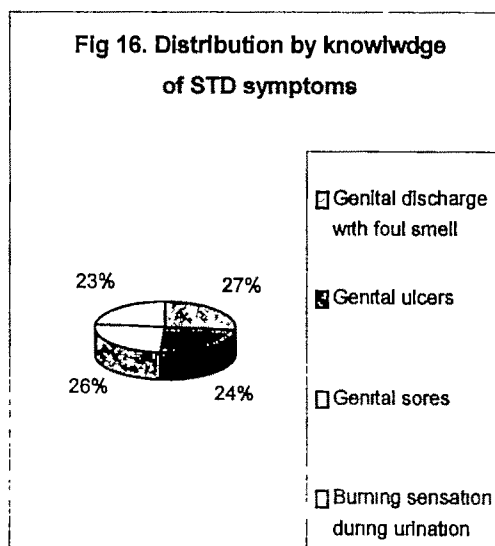
They defined STDs in very words such as

- (a) "it is an infection in sexual organ",
- (b) "it is caused by sexual relations with prostitutes",
- (c) "bad diseases through sexual contact",
- (d) "sex disease" and
- (e) "affects genital parts".

Sexual contact was recognized as the principal mode of STD transmission reflected by 42 respondents. STDs are transmitted through unprotected sex was understood, by at least some of the truckers. Few of them replied that using public urinal could transmit STDs. Some had (mis) conceptions such as "It is caused by bad food" and "avoiding masturbation can be resulted into STDs". Only two of them were aware of the linkage between STD and HIV/AIDS. Many of them had misunderstanding between AIDS and STDs Awareness of STD symptoms was quite low among respondents. Very few respondents were aware of STD symptoms, and few respondents reported having STD symptoms. Symptoms of the problem reported by them were genital discharge with foul smell, genital ulcers, genital sores and burning sensation during urination. Respondents gave the following responses when asked of symptoms that would help them know if a man is infected with any STD:

- (f) "he has wet pants",

Fig 16. Distribution by knowledge of STD symptoms



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- (g) "bad odour",
- (h) "itching private part",
- (i) "he looks sick" and
- (j) "he has rashes in the private part".

Respondents considered to have knowledge of STD symptoms were those who reported genital discharge with foul smell (27%), burning sensation during urination (23%), genital ulcer (24%) or sore (26%) or both discharge and sore in the year prior to the survey. Prevalence of STD symptoms was found to be low among respondents, with about 10% reporting genital discharge with foul smell and genital ulcers and sores in the last year. Of all the truck drivers studied, only 24% reported ever had a STD in the in their life.

Table-3. STD prevalence (self reported)

STD symptoms	Respondents ever had	Percentage
Genital discharge with foul smell	4	4%
Genital ulcers and sores	18	18%
Burning sensation during urination	2	2%
Total	24	24%

Respondents' health-seeking behaviour in case of STDs : Of these who (24%) responded, only ten of them went a proper doctor for these symptoms. Most (6%) went to a private clinic/hospital for treatment or some (4%) undertook treatment in homeopathy clinics. A significant proportion (6%) did not go for any treatment. Others (4%) consulted orthodox medical practitioners for STD treatment and similar proportion (4%) consulted traditional (native) healers. A few (6%) discussed about it with a friend or spouse or a sex partner about the problem.

Table-4. Treatment-seeking behaviour

Source of treatment	No. of respondent	Percentage
Pvt. Clinic	6	6%
Homeopathy	4	4%
Quack	4	4%
Traditional healer	4	4%
No treatment	6	6%
Total	24	24%

Awareness of HIV/AIDS : Knowledge of AIDS and of sexual transmission of AIDS was moderate. Almost all respondents (98%) had heard of AIDS. Only two them had not heard of AIDS. But only 46% heard about HIV. Very few of them knew that the relationship between HIV and AIDS. About 68% spontaneously identified AIDS as a disease that spreads through sexual contact. The respondents explained HIV as such:

- (a) "it is a germ",
- (b) "a kind of blood testing",
- (c) "blood becomes HIV positive" and
- (d) "the cause of AIDS".

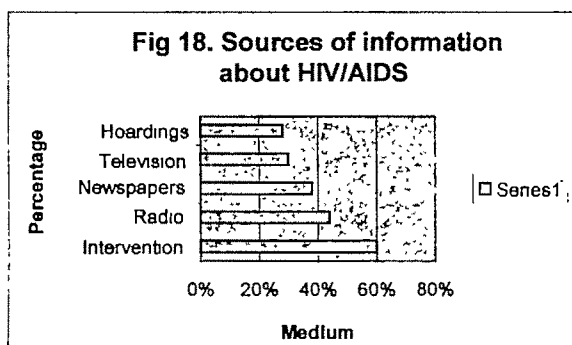
The respondents were requested to comment on what they have heard about AIDS, and they responded as like:

- a) "AIDS is a bad disease",
- b) "it is caused by immoral work",
- c) "prostitute's disease",
- d) "AIDS is STD",
- e) "One can get it through prostitutes and injections" and
- f) "a fatal disease and "it kills" and "you can get it through sex".

Many truckers believed that, ultimately, AIDS was transmitted to immoral persons "We have heard that AIDS is spread because of bad deeds". Most truckers believed that female commercial sex workers, whom they consider immoral, were at risk of contracting AIDS. A strong association was found between stigma and HIV among the truckers.

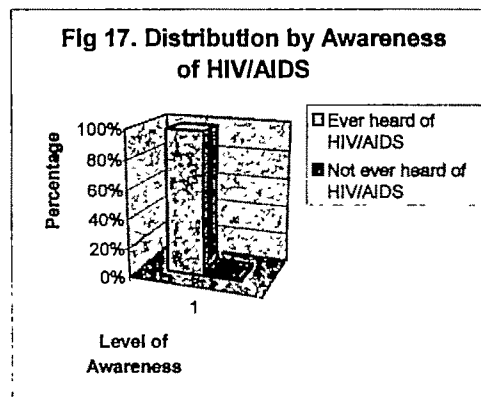
However, less than half of the respondents (42%) knew that HIV/AIDS was incurable. In contrast 58% of the respondents knew that AIDS was curable. 36% respondents knew that treatment were available. Some of them (6%) knew that the medicine of the AIDS was discovered. Few of them (8%) were also found aware of ART in governmental hospital. Few respondents reported that they heard about the ayurvedic or quack treatment of the AIDS.

Sources of information about HIV/AIDS: Anti-AIDS intervention and interpersonal



as a source of information about HIV/AIDS.

Different modes of transmission : Although truckers appeared to be informed about sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS, they hardly seem to have internalized the information or did they believe the knowledge altogether. Awareness of the different modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS was moderate among respondents. Maximum respondents perceived HIV as a killer disease



communication were the media from which most truckers said they had heard about HIV/AIDS, and at least 60% people said they had heard about HIV/AIDS from various roadside programmes and intervention campaigns. The second most important source was television (44%) followed by radio (38%). Newspapers (30%) and hoardings together came next (28%). A few of them referred to friends

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caused by the “galat kam” i.e. regular and casual sexual relationship with the commercial sex workers. Of those, who were aware of HIV/AIDS, 78% reported that AIDS could be transmitted through unprotected sexual contact. Knowledge of transmission through sharing shaving blade was 44%, and 30% reported that AIDS could be transmitted through injections. 24% also knew that the virus passes through blood during transfusions. Awareness of vertical transmission (from pregnant mother to her unborn child) was very low 6%.

Near about half of the respondents being not correctly aware of the following three facts that

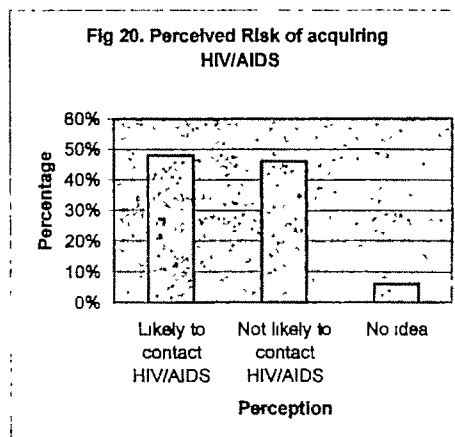
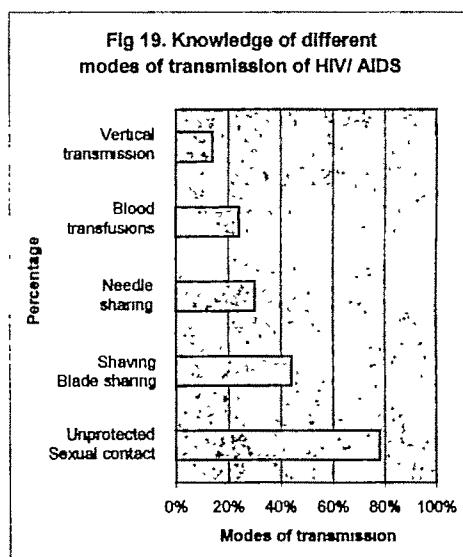
- (a) HIV cannot be transmitted though sharing meals with an infected person,
- (b) HIV cannot be transmitted though through mosquito bites,
- (c) A healthy-looking person to be infected with HIV.

About 48% the respondents were correctly aware that HIV couldn't be transmitted though sharing meals with an infected person. One tenth of them had misconceptions about AIDS transmission like AIDS could be transmitted through using public toilets or lavatory seats, mosquito bites and touching of an infected person.

Different modes of prevention : Knowledge about modes of preventing AIDS through consistent condom use, by having one faithful uninfected partner, and through sexual abstinence, was lower. Comparatively, knowledge of prevention through consistent condom use (42%) was higher among respondents than of other modes of prevention, including by not visiting sex workers (34%), by having safe sex (6%) or using new needle and blade (10%).

Perceived risk of acquiring AIDS : Only six respondents (6%) had no idea about risk. 48% of the respondents perceived themselves as being at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The predominant factors mentioned included having sex with female sex workers. Reasons for their perception are as such

- (a) “Anybody can get it”,
- (b) “By mistake”,
- (c) “If you sex prostitute”,
- (d) “Have sex anyhow”,
- (e) “Because I don't use condom”,
- (f) “I have many partners” and
- (g) “If not careful”.



Those who considered themselves not likely to contact HIV/AIDS (46%) also gave various reasons as such

- a. "I have one sex partner/wife",
- b. "I trust my partner",
- c. "I am careful",
- d. "I don't go to brothels" and
- e. "God protects me".

Prominent among the reasons is the underlying fact that they were careful having sex with single sexual partner especially wife, whom they perceived are less likely to be HIV positive, and using condoms when in doubt.

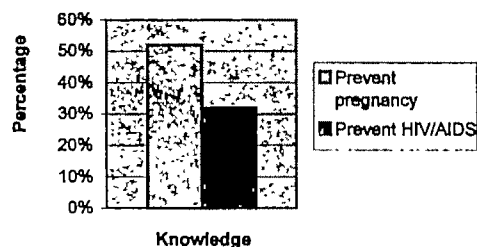
Condom : awareness, attitudes and practices : All respondents had heard of or seen a condom. Condom was popularly known to them. They named condom either by its function, shape, texture, make or brand. The younger respondents were more likely to have used condoms than their older counterparts. Among most of those aware of condoms, also knew that condoms were used to avoid HIV/AIDS and to avoid pregnancy. About 52% knew that condoms could be used to prevent pregnancy but 32% of respondents were aware that condoms could be used to prevent HIV/AIDS. The younger respondents were more likely to have used condoms than their older counterparts. Majority of the respondents reflected a negative attitude to using condom. A variety of reasons were given by the respondents for not using condoms, such as

- (a) "condoms make sex less enjoyable",
- (b) "condoms are offensive to wives or regular partners",
- (c) "it may cause a man to lose his erection",
- (d) "it reduces sexual pleasure",
- (e) "it hurts",
- (f) "trust in partner" and
- (g) "too expensive to use regularly".

Few of the respondents opined, "condoms are needed only with casual partners". On the other hand, some of them accepted condoms positively and opined "are easy to use" and "condoms are good for preventing or delaying pregnancy".

The top three responses received in terms of places from which condoms could be obtained were: pharmacy, sexual partners, and hospitals. The majority of respondents said that condoms were available in pharmacies (28%) and the next most common places were hospitals (16%) followed by sexual partners (8%).

Fig 21. Distribution by Knowledge of Condom



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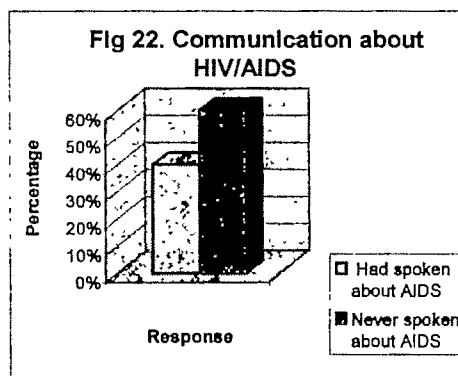
20% of respondents reported consistent condom use with their regular sexual partners in the last year. Overall, 20% respondents had used condoms irregularly with non-regular partners in the last year. Overall, 56% respondents who did not use condoms at last sexual act; they did not do so because they did not find it necessary, while very few (4%) said that there was no time to procure a condom before the actual sexual act.

Care and support towards HIV-Positive persons: Less than half (48%) felt that families would accept another member if s/he was infected with HIV, and about 52% felt that the community would also accept such persons. Some of the respondents 36% perceived a person who suffers from HIV would be a bad person or immoral and that they felt sad for such person. Some respondents (8%) would break off the relationship on knowing that their co-workers or family members HIV positive status and they will isolate that very person from their circles of mobility. The rest will maintain and continue the relationship to help as and when required. They felt that families and community would accept a person if s/he was infected with HIV/AIDS with respect to the question about whether they had known someone with HIV/AIDS, 44% people responded affirmatively. Overall, 56% of the target respondents knew someone who was infected with HIV. Nearly one fourth of respondents also knew people who had died of HIV/AIDS. Many informants alluded to the fact that the majority of the sex workers were very much vulnerable to the disease, followed by the visitors of CSW and the truck- drivers.

Table 5. Attitudes towards the PLWHA

Questions of the respondents	Responses in percentage	
	Yes	No
Should a PLWHA be isolated from society?	52%	48%
Should a PLWHA be allowed to stay in the family?	48%	52%
Should a PLWHA be labelled s a bad person?	36%	64%

Communication about HIV/AIDS with family or relatives: Communication about HIV/AIDS with family and/or relatives was medium in all respondents. 60% said they had never spoken with family, relatives or friends about HIV/AIDS. The main causes of not talking about the HIV/AIDS with family members and relatives were their shyness. Some of them also answered that they did not think that talking about it was necessary to the family members and relatives. Within the friend circle, such issues were not discussed, because they were busy in their works. The rest (40%) said they spoke at least once or twice about the disease, because these issues were meaningful and necessary in present days for preventing HIV/AIDS.



Exposure to Mass Media: The truckers feels are the most appropriate sources to be used should take into account. Information about public preferences about mass media should ideally guide not only where investments are made but also the design of the information to be presented in anti- HIV/AIDS awareness. Regular exposure to the mass media was moderate among the respondents. About two in five respondents watched television regularly, listened to the radio, or read a newspaper. Slightly more respondents (44%) watched television regularly than listened to the radio (38%) or read the newspaper (30%). A slightly more than one third of the respondents (34%) were not likely to have received messages relayed on HIV/AIDS or condom usage in the media.

Table 6. Exposure to mass media

Media	Person involved	Percentage
Television	44	44%
Radio	38	38%
Newspaper/Magazine	34	34%

Organized communication: In general, interpersonal communication on diseases such as HIV/AIDS and STDs, or on condom usage, was found to be moderate among the target group. 70% of the respondents had participated in any kind of awareness campaign on AIDS or STDs. Only 34 respondents (34%) ever been tested for HIV and had received free check-ups for STDs or HIV/AIDS. Most of the truckers were exposed to the truckers' intervention programmes in many truckers' points all over India. Majority had an negligent attitude to these programmes, because they thought these kinds of programmes stigmatized them or their occupation and helped keeping them excluded from the larger society. One of my respondents expressed his anger by saying that "you are all good, but we are bad because we are poor and working people in this occupation". Few of them (10%) see these kinds of programmes seriously and perceived a positive attitude to them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The truckers of the present study, (i) 88% with this principal occupation, (ii) residentially from four northern and eastern provinces of India are (iii) mostly (80%) married with (iv) 40% married before being adults and (v) most with children (72%), (vi) 66% of whom belong to (21-30) years age-group and (vii) with the range of education from primary to secondary level. They are almost evenly distributed (viii) in their distance traveled per trip from less than 500 kilometers to more than 2000 kilometers. (ix) Majority of the truckers (64%) stays away from their families in the range from 2 months to 7 months, with more chances of an association between duration of time away from home and sexual behaviour. Though (x) most of the truckers (82%) are exposed to consumption of alcohol, (xi) the range having it daily to weekly basis comes low (28% to 38%) and also (xii) the percentage of drug users (16%). (xiii) 24% of the truckers enjoy having alcohol or drug before sexual acts.

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The truckers (62%) pointing out sex as the most desirable end of conjugality come down in number (39%) for expecting sex as the prioritised concern of marriage, though 40% show attitude in favour of multiple sexual partners and some more of (46%) pre-marital and extra-marital relationship. 98% of the truckers had first sexual relation at the average of age at first sexual relation (15 to 16) years. Though most of the truckers prefer peno-vaginal sex, 36% enjoy oral and/or anal sex similarly. 24% of the married truckers have multiple sexual partners and 32% go to the sex workers, though 72% of the married truckers admitted that they at least once went to sex-workers. There is a stronger trend for the unmarried truckers going to the sex workers. Same-sex (MSM) behaviour, though reported by 4% of the population, it is more seemingly denied by some of the other respondents to avoid 'stigma' and 'social disapproval'. However, the contrasting scene of same-sex sexuality between truckers of two adjoining nations of South Asia, those studied in Pakistan (ECPAT, 2006)⁷ and those of the present study in India again indicate the impact of culture on sexual practices and the differential nature of spread of risky behaviour.

Regarding sexual diseases, one of the most striking features is represented by the facts of (a) 68% of the truckers having ever heard of STDs, (b) 24% as clearly assignable self-reported STDs, (c) whereas only 10% seeking proper medical care for the remedy. It is also clear that some types of sexual partner (wife, only one person or a known person) are considered 'safe'. The trust and practices with regular sex partners acts as one of the main obstacles to safer sex practices among truck drivers. In the present study, the majority including the married truck drivers and those with regular partners did not use condoms despite high levels of sexual activity outside that relationship. Notions of fidelity and perceived low risk of infection place truck drivers in the position of potentially transmitting a STD to their primary partner(s) and potentially acquiring an STD.

In spite of the 98% of the truckers having heard of AIDS, they have remained unaware of the proper nature of either HIV or AIDS, the relationship between the two and treatments. Only 60% truckers have elaborately heard it from the intervention programmes, though 70% of them participated in any intervention programme. Percentage of truckers well below it heard of AIDS from different sources of media. Their reporting about the modes of transmission and combined (mis)conceptions about them indicate the differential depth of awareness of AIDS among the truckers, though most of them worry about the risk of being infected by the disease. At least one tenth of the population considered all the intervention programmes seriously.

The principal consequences of the confused awareness have been observed to be (I) increasing stigmatisation of the sex-workers and AIDS patients, (II) unresolved confusions

⁷For example, 95% truckers 'indulge in sex with helpers' and "The coach drivers sometimes take boys for ride to other cities where they abuse them. Both boys and key informants said many long distance truck drivers keep boys for sexual services on a permanent basis. The animators endorsed this information. These boys are kept under the guise of helpers or apprentices and accompany the drivers on all trips." (ECPAT, 2006. pg. 47).

and indifference to the 'negatively' labelled disease, (III) public denial of unsafe sex and sex with sex-workers because of the fear of being discriminated and stigmatised, (IV) marginal awareness of safer sex practices with same-sex individuals. The reasons for not using condoms are very strongly proclaimed by the respondents. More worrying is the fact of a very low percentage of consistent users (20%) of condom over the last year. Except two truckers, all others do not use condoms for oral sex. Interestingly enough nearly half of the truckers would suggest to accept any member of the families suffering from AIDS, though they were not sure whether their own families would do similarly to their opinions. 34% of the truckers have tested for HIV/AIDS, on the contrary, the stigma for persons with AIDS was reflected strongly in 64% of the truckers, who labelled such patients as 'bad persons'. The stigma and isolation of groups, principally the people in poverty, for intervention and campaign programmes, comprise of a major cause for their indifference, denial and resistance to participation in the intervention programmes. The socialisation of sexuality in their families and profession is another strong source of incompatibility with prevalent pattern of communication about HIV/AIDS and its reception by the truckers. Knowledge of AIDS is low among truck drivers. It appears extremely unlikely that knowledge alone will lead to the adoption of safer sex practices. The impact of the intervention is limited due to the temporality of the effect, in other words, the difference between having 'information' and afterwards using and utilising that as 'knowledge'.

Reducing the stigma associated with STDs and HIV/AIDS infections in a 'local-tradition-oriented' population will only be possible by encouraging greater openness in discussion of sexual matters. Similarly, they need to feel comfortable with the means and modes of communication, which may not isolate them as groups and invoke the easy access to close interaction with the accountable resources. This might be an important part of AIDS prevention activities in India. For those who associate AIDS with "those dirty randis" (filthy female sex workers), it is difficult to explain why they continue to patronise the same sex workers. Research is needed into truck drivers' 'ideologies of sexual risk' to determine what is going into their decision-making regarding high-risk intercourse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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⁸as used by Diaz and Ayala, 1999.

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THE IDENTITIES OF GENDERED SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY: A REPORT ON MSM PERFORMANCES IN NETWORKS OF THE KOTHIS IN URBAN WEST BENGAL

Soumi Dey^a, Arnab Das^b, Snehasish Raul^c, Suchandrima Sen^d, Tanusree Shaw^e
Debabrata Saha^f, Kaberi Chakrabarti^h, Rajarshi Chakrabarty^h
and Dipankar Chatterjeeⁱ

Abstract: The paper emphasizes on the emergence of sub/categories within kothi network of gendered sexual performances of the MSM population in localities of urban West Bengal. As part of a project, the participant observation for the last one and a half years, with intervals, in the population of and linked to Kothi network explores the lived experience of the people. Case studies, life histories, depth interviews of individuals and groups, FGDs are the means to obtain data on the people and performances, purposively selected and connected by snowball technique. Nevertheless, the paper only selects to interpret briefly the identities of gendered sexual subjectivity, which may only be applicable to the normative criteria of their situationally specific subject positions. These identities may not fit to every subject position of the same individual, even in relation to sexual performance in other situations. Such an emergence of construct indicates the fluid and situational nature of any such construct of subjective identity.

Keywords: Kothis, MSM, Anthropology, Dupli, Gender, Sexuality, Identity.

INTRODUCING THE QUESTIONS

Post-Boasian interest in gender and sexuality saw 1960s and 1970s as an abundance of ethnographic articulations of sexuality, especially of 'homosexuality', though with ambivalence about understanding the relationship among "sex," "sexuality" and "gender". From the early 1980s there has been some significant increase and turns in studies on sexuality. With Rubin's *Thinking Sex* (1984), anthropologists started conceiving of 'sexuality' and 'gender' as two distinct, yet linked realms of human knowledge and experience. There has been a tremendous explosion of research on sexuality in recent decades (Allgeier and Allgeier, 2000; Hawkins & Stackhouse, 1998). Since 1980s anthropological confirmations of a wide diversity of same-

^aJunior Research Fellow, UGC and former UGC/UPE project fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^bSelection Grade Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^cUGC/UPE project fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

^dUGC/UPE project fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Calcutta.

^eJunior Research Fellow, UGC, Dept. of Anthropology, Calcutta University

^fPhysician and Independent Researcher

^gSelection Grade Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta

^hLecturer, Krishnath College, Berhampore, Murshidabad

ⁱLecturer, Faculty of Integrated Rural and Tribal Development and Management, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University

sex pleasures, behaviours and courtship rituals¹ (e.g. Herdt, 1981, 1987, 1997; Whitam, 1986; and Wieringa, 1989; Callender and Kochems, 1983; Williams, 1986; Roscoe, 1991, 1998) touched India, principally as a by-product of HIV-AIDS activism (Dowsett, 2003). “Men who have sex with men” (MSM) as a behavioural phrase² was seen as sub-culturally contextual, otherwise hidden, hard-to-reach, or marginalized population. The works also show that MSM³ may not necessarily hold the notion of sexual identity or of a distinct community (Blackwood ed., 1986; Parker, 1991; Parker and Carballo, 1990. Parker and Aggleton, ed., 1999). Facing the emerging HIV/AIDS pandemic in the developing world, the possibility of using ethnography to interpret cultural contexts related to gender and sexuality among people with MSM (not necessarily holding the notion of sexual identity or of a distinct sexual community) behaviours became priority by a few decades.

People with MSM sexual behavior comprise of many identities, gender constructs, and communities in India. The scholars (like Morris 1994; Cohen 1995, 2005; Nanda 1990; Reddy 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007; Hall 2005; Khan, 2000, 2001, 2005; Purkayastha, 1999; Jenkins 2004 and others) emphasize on the past and the present of the local categories of ‘other’ genders and sexuality in India. The scholars differ and overlap in their frameworks in accepting any unanimous position. According to Rosalind Morris hijra becomes “a drag queen” who [is] a hero[ine] in a global sexual resistance (Morris 1994: 16). As with any other community in India they are crosscut by a range of other axes that shape their identities (Reddy 2005, 2007). Cohen (1995) studies hijras and commented on castration as castration of desire. He stated about jankhas and zenanas (similar to kothis) as “men who sometimes dress like women and dance like hijras but do not select castration” (Cohen, 1995: 276). Hall (2005) posits kothi as a reference point for other sexualities and not as a distinct identity to claim a space within the sexuality continuum, as they (Hall 1996) switch between the use of feminine and masculine gender symbols. Almost in the similar vein Jenkins (2004) locates Kothis/kotis inside the culture, as lesser men and the most stigmatised in the patriarchal, heterosexist and homophobic framework. Non-kothi men having sexual engagements with the kothis perceive about themselves that they just fool around when they have sex with kothis, just discharging, not really having sex, like a ‘real man’ (Jenkins, 2004). In contrast to the somewhat similar positions of Cohen, Hall, Jenkins, Naqvi and Mujtaba, Reddy’s ethnographic fieldwork in Hyderabad found that hijras fall under the umbrella term kothis referring to a multitude of

¹like, berdache or xaniths, female husbands, “boy inseminating rituals”, “age-structured sexuality” or many different other forms all over the world, and finally Hijra (Vanita, 2002, Vanita and Kidwai, 2000) and MSM in India.

²It was accepted by governments in the global programme on AIDS conference in Geneva (1992-93). The phrase “men who have sex with men” (MSM) is a collective social identity for all men, who have sex with other men irrespective of how they might identify themselves.

³MSM’s include all men who have sex with men whether or not they identify themselves as gay, thus including gay and bi-sexual men as well as straight men (as some men who are not the receptors of same sex relations do not consider themselves gay– i.e., a married men who receives oral sex from a man may not identify himself as gay or bi-sexual when asked) (HIV InSite, 2000).

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identities within the spectrum of male sexuality. Hijras and kothis are coherent identities crafted by diverse ethical practices which do not construct them merely as sexual identities but as identities articulated by and through a multiplicity of morally evaluated differences (Reddy 2005). There appeared to be constant movement and flux between the various kothi 'identities' which Reddy found in fieldwork at Hyderabad, i.e. 'kada-chatla kothi', 'hijra', 'jogin', 'zanana' and 'siva sati'⁴. These categories highlight the complicated nature of each of these subject positions. No easy correlations exist between ideals, embodied desire/praxis and sexual identity. The fluidity is possible because each subject position is variously determined according to lived experience and interpretation of desire, pleasure and morality. But despite the fluid scale of gendered and sexual identities within the kothi spectrum, it is notable that such fluidity hardly ever crosses the kothi/panthi divide (Reddy 2005, 2007).

The activist NAZ Foundation International⁵ consider Kothi as a sexual minority, a community historically rooted in Indian cultural traditions, as well as a self-identifying label, more a sexual signifier than a gender in the broader framework of Kothi-Panthi dynamics. Their comprehension of "kothi framework" (Khan 2000) is realistically complex, nuanced and politically empowered. To Khan (2004)⁶ the frameworks of male to male sex are substantially divergent and inclusive. It includes normative males who desire to penetrate as the only signifier, feminised males (kothis), along with hijras, who desire to be penetrated by other males called panthi/giriya.

⁴Various kothi 'identities' what Reddy found in Hyderabad are as follows:

- (a) **Kada-chatla kothi**—They live 'gupt/ secret' life, not having had the desire to wear sarees or have the operation (genital); (b) **Hijra**—claim them as Muslim, believe in 'katna' or castration, the castrated are called 'cibri' and non-castrateds called 'akkuva', (c) **Jogin**—claim them as Hindus, don't believe in 'katna' and don't take 'halal' meat; (d) **Zenana**—claim them as Hindus but take 'halal' meat; (e) **Siva sati**—same as jogin.

⁵Since 1996 Naz Foundation International, based on its knowledge and experience of working with MSM frameworks and networks, has provided technical assistance and support to develop some 28 CBO MSM sexual health projects in the South Asia region. As a part of this experience we have developed a range of tools and resources to support this activity.

⁶Khan described the sub-groups among MSM population for the purposes of NAZ foundation's sexual health project; these groups are defined as:

- (a) **Kothi**—A self-identifying label for those males who feminise their behaviours (either to attract "manly" male sexual partners and/or as part of their own gender construction and usually in specific situations and contexts), and who state that they prefer to be sexually penetrated anally and/or orally. Kothi behaviours have a highly performative quality in social spaces. Self-identified Kothis use this term for males who are sexually penetrated, even when their performative behaviour is not feminised. This is the primary and most visible framework of MSM behaviours. Kothis state that they do not have sex with others like themselves, only "real men". However many may also be married to women as a family obligation; (b) **Double decker**—Those whose sexual acts include both penetrator and penetrated, and whose sense of sexual desire may be the closest to what would be understood by the term gay, (c) **Panthi/Giryas**—A kothi label for any "manly male." A panthi/girya is by definition a man who penetrates, whether it is a woman and/or another male. Panthi/Giryas would most likely also be married to women and/or access other females. Their occupations

Simultaneously, it may be noted that the scholars have also paid attention to the details of the process and formation of gendered sexuality of the localities (Wikan, 1977; Carrillo, 2002; McDonald, 1982; Chauncey, 1994). The approach of joining gender with sexuality as gendered sexuality for looking into social construction, politics, culture, law and above all health in everyday lives (Stearns, 1995; Holland *et al.* 1992; Hoogland, 1999; Austin, 2003; Heasley and Crane Eds, 2003; Ragnarsson *et al.* 2008; Ssali 2009) is gaining both culture-specific and general appeal to academy. It emphasises on the local world of gendered sexual practices, so far called MSM (Loue, 2008:3) :

“The term “men who have sex with men,” or MSM, came into being in the 1980s in the context of public health efforts to understand men’s sexual behavior as it relates to HIV transmission and prevention... The term is used to refer to a wide range of distinct groups of men: those who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender; incarcerated self-identified heterosexual men who, due to their circumstances, engage in voluntary sex with other men; self-identified heterosexual men who engage in sex with other men as a means of survival during incarceration, periods of homelessness, or for economic gain; men who have sex with females and/or with male-to-female transgender persons but also have sex with males; men who self-identify as “same-gender loving” or “sexual freaks;” and men who self-identify as “questioning...”

THE QUESTION AND THE ENQUIRY

Very much with the questions of the aforesaid fluid nature of diverse identities among Indians with MSM behaviours, especially in the expanding networks of the kothis/kotis, the present paper aims at reporting briefly the emerging perception of similar such identities/subjectivity in urban centres of three districts of West Bengal.

It has been an ongoing work on the MSM behaviour in India that began with the identification, contact, rapports and participation in the lives of the people in the networks of the hijras and CBOs with people of MSM behaviour. This particular work started at the end of 2008 and has been continuing with intervals till date. The data derive from in-depth interviews of individuals and groups, focus group discussions, case histories, observation as ‘friend’ in their everyday lives. So far nearly two hundred insiders of the local MSM networks have

vary across the social class spectrum from rickshaw drivers to businessmen. Some of these real men in private situations, have also revealed that at times they enjoy being sexually penetrated and have asked for this. In such occasions they will select a double-decker as a sexual partner. However their public park identity is secured through only being seen to be going with kothis. There are the jiggery dosto, close male friends of approximately equal age, who may also have sex with each other, sometimes involving mutual penetration.; (d) **Hijra**—A self-identified term used by males who define themselves as “not men/not women” but as a “third gender.” Hijras cross-dress publicly and privately and are a part of a strong social, religious, and cultural community. Ritual castration may be part of the hijra identity, but not all hijras are castrated. Sex with men is common, and like men who have sex with kothis, such men would see themselves as ‘real men’ and not homosexual; (e) **Gay/homosexual**—These terms have very little significance for the vast majority of males who have sex with males, and only seem to have some meaning to those with access to English, and who are primarily middle/upper classes, a small minority in India. Even in their context, marriage becomes a primary focus of identity.

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been kept in touch, who are between 11 years and 60 years of age. Apart from the offices of the CBOs of the males the fieldwork includes fourteen different localities of the metropolitan district of Kolkata, three localities of Howrah district, one locality of South 24 Pargana district. Snowball techniques helped reaching the expanding network, though with no limit of such networks, which are also fluid in nature. The pivotal network, addressed here, belongs to the Kothi framework of MSM practices. The present paper intends to limit itself to the focus on the emergence of the construct of the new categories, similar to Reddy's (2005) observation, within the network. The (sub)categories are situational usage, but indicates the expansion and intensification of the lived experiences. Perhaps, they also indicate how the cultural responses to identity and 'otherness' culminate in forming and relating the local knowledge of gender, sexuality to wider web of culture and society.

KOTHI AT CENTRE: THE (SUB)CATEGORIES

While 'kothi' has been a general usage of term of reference to the self-identity of such males, who are effeminate, prefer MSM behaviour and favour 'real men' (only taking insertive role in sexuality). One popular insider understanding is usually seriously considered for analysis in research that the kothis know and share the fact that their identity also indicate their lower economic and social status compared to the gays and other MSM population, who maintain distance and isolation from them. Even if they come into contact with the kothis in secret and sole purpose of sexuality they are unlikely to attach any importance to their normative constructs of terms and identities. Only among the kothis the simultaneous and situational usages of different other terms for distinguishing categories among themselves have also been observed. Three such subject positions of identity are more in practice:

(a1) The self identified '*kothis*' or '*Arial kothis*' (*pakki/pure kothis*) perform effeminacy and have sex with 'real man' *Parikh*. They realize themselves as "not men" and more like women. Most of them prefer loud make-ups in any of their public events and wear feminine dresses. They wish flamboyance in their public appearances to attract the 'real man' and willing to be sexually penetrated by them always. They are also called as '*varakti kothis*'. The act of masturbation is like tabooed for them, most of them deny to their friends if they masturbate. Majority reveal that they do not wish to show their penis at the time of having sex and wish to make the 'man' partner (*Parikh*) realize that he has sex with somebody like woman. Sometimes they change their names to a feminine one within the community and occasionally in society. Bhaskar a 29 years old respondent said,

"I'm a woman within a male body, I possess every thing like woman, I love to make up, love to wear skirt, I can cook, can clean my room, bed, clothes, I can dance, even I love only boys for affairs... My friends call me as Bipasa instead of Bhaskar."

(a2) '*Kori Peshe Kothi*' do not choose to use feminine make-ups or to wear feminine dresses, but like other kothis they wish to perform feminine roles for the 'real men' and to seek pleasure only with the role of insertee. Majority of them belong to the upper economic and or social status compared to others. They are ashamed to perform effeminacy in public. Pratap a 25 years old respondent narrated

“Previously I didn’t know the term kothi or dupli... After inclusion in the network I became aware of these terms. Here I come to know that I’m a kothi but I never dress or decorate like woman... They (other kothis) call me ‘kori/kori peshe’... It’ll be very embarrassing for me and my family if I put on ‘odd’ make ups and am scorned in public. But sometimes I wish to do the same when I see my friends looking gorgeous in feminine make-up... I keep my moustaches to keep myself ‘straight’ in public, though I can’t hide to be easily recognized as kothi/feminine by people like us.”

About the kothis, it becomes hard to establish any linear correspondence of the preference and performance between sexuality and gender in general. In more than ten cases the kothis act as kori peshe kothi after marriage under pressure. They perform as men within the family or social relations, while in secret and in this network they like to perform as kothis to attract ‘real men’ (‘Panthis’). Maloy, a 38 years old father of two kids revealed,

“After my mother’s death, my father and my elder brothers pressurized me to get married... I’ve no choice as I live in a village... I have to cover up my effeminacy for getting married... My wife is my first female sex partner, she is happy with me... but I get pleasure with same-sex, not less than what I get from my wife. I never felt any conflict in these two types of sexual attachment. I love to feminine make-up and when I get chance I do it. Sometimes, unconsciously and of course very naturally I cannot help expressing my feminine attitude before my close relatives and friends in ‘straight’ social circles but nobody can unearth my sexuality.”

(a3) ‘Dupli kothi’ is also such a situational and performative category within the fold of the kothis. They like to appear as kothis but sometimes they prefer to take penetrative sexual role like that of ‘real man’. As they possess both the desires to penetrate and being penetrated, the kothis sometimes call them double-decker of less respectable or impure (‘bila’) behaviour. But so far as I met more than twenty such persons, they rarely desire to have sex with other arial kothis. They only prefer masculine males, if not ‘real’ always (solely inserter) as sexual partners. Utpal, a 31 years old respondent reported,

“If customers [in sex work] make demand to get penetrated then I do this... I don’t feel any hesitation or problem to penetrate, it gives pleasure, but I’ve enjoyed more to get penetrated by ‘real man’.”

From among the above three, in the last two bisexual performances are quite frequent, though their life histories suggest that the realization of same-sex attraction and practices brought them inside the Kothi fold of identity. For the present fieldworkers, it is not rare to meet such local non-kothi ‘men’ with either homosexual or bisexual practices outside such networks. They are quite similar in understanding their (closeted) sexuality, but have never heard the term ‘kothi’, thus never think of behavioural change like the kothis. Many of them accept their innate same-sex orientation, but may not identify themselves as homosexuals or even bisexual. Most of them are guilty of acquiring or being ascribed with the “wrong”, but inescapable sexual practices.

(b) Likewise, linked to the network of the kothis there are some other sub/categories of self-identified ‘Dupli’ and ‘Dupli Guptis’ are the men with ‘secret’ sexual MSM behaviour. They appear always ‘straight’ in hetero-normative norms, but act as both inserter and insertee in sexual performances with other men. They are recognized as ‘bad’ (bila)

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category of either dupli or gay by the kothis. The duplis differ from the emerging identity of dupli gupti as an ascription of the former to the later. Most of the Dupli guptis are married and with children, so they keep their sexuality as more closeted (gupti). Majority of the dupli guptis say that they have the desire to have sex with females and establish family. The Duplis are incidentally more literate than the kothis of the network. Majority of nearly thirty such men passed tenth standard and several passed twelfth standard. Anil a 27 years old respondent, doing B.Com narrated

“I’ve enjoyed both sexual acts, to penetrate and being penetrated... Yes, I have sex with girls but prefer to sex with other duplis... I just hate to have make up like kothis or any feminine attitude.. I’m a man after all; I never invite my kothi friends in my house... I feel very uncomfortable with them in public.”

Some identified themselves as ‘Homosexuals’. They act either as only insertee or both inserter and insertee, but not only insertee. They dislike being the members of any MSM organization, but many of them know the terms of Kothi community for coming in contact with the HIV/AIDS prevention programs. Unlike Anil, some of them perform effeminate demeanor, but they don’t dislike using feminine make up. Majority is unmarried and not willing to marry a woman. Binay, a schoolteacher is 31 years old, narrated

“I don’t believe in kothi dupli terms.... I’m a man and prefer to have sex with man and that’s why I’m homosexual; I enjoy sharing my emotions with men.”

Outside the network of the kothis, the fieldworkers came across nearly twenty such men in ‘cruising localities’ of the men in search of men for sexual courtship. Earning from sex work in secret has been the pursuits of most of such men, who have never heard of the terms like dupli or kothi, but they neither identify themselves as gay, nor Dupli, nor bisexual, nor homosexual, but only as men who enjoy sex with men in both roles of penetrative sexuality. Thus they decided to ‘use’ this behaviour to earn money for running their families. Some such adult male members of families are married with children and some not willing to marry even. It is again very difficult to discern the relationship of their sexuality with any category of gender or concept, rather than describing them.

(c) After 2nd July 2009 when Delhi High court declared that section 377 should be amended and any sex between consenting adults should be legalized, some previously self-identified kothis, who are relatively more educated, radically shifted the usage of identity from kothi to gay. They explained it as more suitable as it is going to be more acceptable to the educated people, media and even supportive organizations. Gays are in much respectable position in social hierarchy of MSM people even; the common people do not know the other local terminologies. Raj a 22 years old respondent, who passed twelfth standard narrated,

“Statement, like ‘I’m a gay’ can appeal more to a rich, good looking, educated and aristocratic ‘real man’ (parik) in public like discotheque, restaurant, shopping mall etc. People are not conscious of such local usage of kothi.”

In fact, the self-identified gays outside the network of kothis belong to a separate section of urban population that are socialized in contact with western education, away from the urban

poor and rural homogeneity, in those circles of everyday life, to which the kothis are yet to be ascribed. Many of the gays as individuals or in groups do not know any such term kothi/dupli. Another dimension of formation of subjectivity operates across different identities.

(d) On the other hand, if a history of transformation of a kothi into hijra may be deciphered from a kothi subject position, it may be seen again as an intentional performance with certain situational criteria. The members of the hijra group do not call themselves as hijra, the insiders known to each other with the term Akua and Chhibri. The Akuas are the non-castrated members of a group and if they castrate their genitals they are chhibris. While a kothi decides joining hijra community through a ritualistic entry, 'Dikhsha' initiated by a Guru maa (the owner of a group), s/he becomes Akua and after castration, if at all, becomes Chhibri. Nupur hijra narrates his/her transformation.

"I came to this 'daira' (hijra office) two years back with my friend an Akua, who previously was a kothi... My guru Ritu accepted me as her chela... I operated my genitals two months back. Before joining hijra community I was a kothi. I saw my Akua friends earning lot of money and can put make up and wear sari like a woman in public without any direct harassment from outsiders. I decided to be join such a group..."

Like Nupur, most of the hijras have sex with the 'real men' very secretly. Generally they do not disclose their sexual practices. Most of them say that they have only one (who is her husband) or no sexual partner in life.

(e) The 'real man' (solely inserter in sexual performance) of the kothis is addressed as 'Panthi' or 'Giriya'. While a 'real man' is in contact with a kothi as a performer, he becomes Parikh to that respective kothi/dupli. Generally this term is not used for self-identification of a 'real man', rather it is used by the kothi for identifying 'other' men (non-dupli, non-hijra and non-dupli) sexual partner, who irrespective of his sexual orientation may like to perform sexually the inserter role. The fluidity lies in the observation that the self-identified gays and some of the long-term sexual partners of certain kothis, believing themselves to be 'straight' (heterosexual), accept the usage of his identity as Parikh, more as an expression of affection, less as a pride. It has also been found that in occasions certain Parikhs play the role of insertee to his Dupli sexual partner, but never with his kothi partner. Again, the insider criteria for constructing the performing subject position of real men (Panthi/Giriyas) may differ across situations. Panthi is considered to be the ideal usage for denoting the penetrative performance of the sexual partner of a self-identified Kothi or Dupli. An organizing head of a local CBO rightly said it, while discussing the issue,

"Dada (elder brother), who is going to check what actual roles are performed by two sexual partners in privacy and in varied contexts of their intimacy. Within and beyond norm everything is private till the intimacy sustains."

CONCLUSION

In spite of the above insider understanding of the fluidity of identity of gendered sexual subjective positions, the identity sub/categories of Kothis, Duplis, Gay, Akua, Chhibri, Panthi/Giriya/Parikh, Homosexual man and so on are found to sustain in the kothi network. It is also

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difficult to trace out the nature of identification with respect to self-, other- or both. It is also difficult to ascertain how far strong is the attachment of their sexual and /or gendered subjectivity to such identity irrespective of their acceptance of the usage.

However, the emergence of the identity positions is also found to be shared in the said network. Quite similar to the observation of Reddy (2005) Kothi identity remains generic, here with prefixes indicating specific positions, but the hijras do not prefer to attach any kothi usage with their identity. The identities are linked both to the wider social and cultural milieu to which the kothis belong and to the individual subjective criteria of asserting themselves. This question of links with the wider social-cultural context of the identity positions of the segments of MSM population remains common with other identities outside the Kothi network.

The present researchers only may ascertain that the HIV-AIDS activism in the localities of West Bengal has helped expanding and intensifying the Kothi network and framework of understanding identity questions. They function both as exclusivist and inclusivist forces inside, while 'gay' framework has been a threat of liquidation of their identity politics. It is because of the very nature of hierarchic, rather than horizontal relatedness between 'gay' and 'kothi' framework of gendered sexual identity of MSM population.

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(RE)MOORING IDENTITY AND NEGOTIATING SALIENCE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TAMIL SETTLERS IN A CITY OF WEST BENGAL

Avik Roy⁺

Abstract: This article intends to explore the processes involved in the production and sustained expression of an ethnic identity of the Tamil Brahman settlers at an urban locality of Howrah district in West Bengal. Much of the works on ethnicity have been rooted in understanding issues like inequalities, inclusion/exclusion and negotiation within and between communities. The emergent focus on the external process defining identity as an imposition on a minority/less powerful group by the majority/ more powerful, cannot deny the consequence of internal agency of any ethnic group as a similar process. The ethnographic observations and interviews for nearly nine months of fieldwork with the author in the role of an observer as participant in the daily life of the group focus more on the internal processes than on the external ones. The production and maintenance of religiously symbolizing markers of identity are strongly internalized and negotiated for the sake of perpetuating a sense of supremacy associated with caste notions of purity and pollution among the Brahman Tamil settlers in the city. The author concludes that in addition to the religious sphere, there are other means of celebrating and reinforcing the identity to ensure a sense of belonging, cohesion and easy mutual understanding among the members of the group.

Keywords: Ethnicity, minority, identity, tradition, community, urban.

INTRODUCTION

The term “ethnic” is commonly used to refer to a group that differs from others in terms of *culture* (either immigrant and/or non-immigrant), *nationality*, *race*, or even *religion*¹. Research on ethnic identity focuses on descriptions, expression, narratives or discourse, and ethnic experience². It considers ethnic self-identity, ethnic salience, symbolic ethnicity, social preference, social meaning, as well as social significance.³ Some of the work focuses on perceptions of self-identity, perceptions of social identity, preference, social preference, social meaning, social significance, and social category membership, while other work explores various identification patterns, the existence of hyphenated identities, as well as the phenomenon of transnational identity.⁴

The literature includes material on ethnic origin or heritage, the homeland, traditional culture, value orientations, ethnic norms and ethnic subculture. Much of the work, however, tends to focus on the migration/emigration/immigration, settlement experiences, adaptation strategies, and group survival of these immigrant populations. Particular attention is given

⁺Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET), Dept. of Anthropology, University of Calcutta.

¹Bader, 2001

²See, Gordon 1964; Alba 1990; Waters 1990; 1999; Phinney 1991; Jacobson 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001

³for example: Baumann, 1999

⁴for example: Halter, 2000

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to acculturation models or strategies (assimilation, integration, marginalization, segregation) pursued by various ethnic groups within a context of cultural diversity as well as differences in acculturation processes within an ethnic group.⁵ Strategies pursued by specific ethnic groups also receive attention, and include the establishment of ethnic enclaves, ethno-specific recreational activities, and the process of ethnic regeneration. Language, language preferences or abilities and language retention are also examined.⁶ Most, however, use ethnic groups as the main unit of analysis, only sometimes making reference to within group differences.¹ Theories of social identity, developed by Tajfel (1981), Turner (1987), and others, emphasize the importance of collective membership and the significant effects that group membership can have on behavior. These behaviors include feelings of attraction toward members of the in-group, stereotypic judgments of out-group members, social influence, and preferential treatment toward the in-group (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner, 1987).

A number of investigators have shown that the need for an expression of social identity is not static. Brewer (1991), for example, found that the motivation to claim group membership depends on the competing needs for inclusiveness and uniqueness, whereby people seek an optimal level of distinctiveness in their choice of a collective. What particular identity is claimed can depend on situational cues that make an identity salient or that fit with one's own priorities (Deaux & Major, 1987; Oakes, 1987).

Although the presentation of self may be quite variable, it can also be argued that the self-concept is generally stable across time. Individuals not only view themselves and others in consistent terms, but they actively create social situations that support their views of themselves (Swann, 1983). Across the life span, however, there are transitions that can have significant effects on self-definition (Hormuth, 1990; Ruble, 1994).

Jenkins (1977) discusses two interesting dimensions of ethnicity. First, he suggests that notions of ethnicity and ethnic group travel together. Second, the nomenclature 'ethnic group' appears as a natural and neutral notion to the much beleaguered and abused notion of race. That being part of an 'ethnic group' provides a sense of belonging and an assertion of identity that accompany certain advantages and disadvantages. In a broad sense, three approaches to the understanding of ethnicity can be considered, namely, *Primordialist*, *Instrumentalist*, and *Constructivist*. In Constructivist Model, the emphasis has shifted to negotiation of multiple subjects over group boundaries and identity. Jenkins (1997) has offered 'a basic social anthropological model of ethnicity' in which he cautions us to remember that ethnicity or culture is not something that people have or they belong but it is a complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives, within which they construct ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows⁷. This reconstruction of ethnicity holds the view that ethnicity is neither inherited nor completely manipulable positions that was assumed by Instrumentalists and Primordialists.

⁵for example: Ogbu 1991

⁶for example: Portes and Zhou 1993

⁷Jenkins, Richard. (1997: 14)

THE ISSUES

In this present work, the author tried to understand this “plasticity of ethnicity” (borrowing the term of Jenkins, 1997) and how it is created, modified, and perpetuated among the members of a group that share a common culture, language, etc. even while setting in a distant place away from their original homeland and having people of other ethnic group(s) as neighbors. An effort has been made to find out: i) the self ascription of identity, i.e., the Tamils’ own impression of themselves, ii) how they see themselves as Tamils, iii) what according to them are essential and/or most important about being Tamil, and iv) what they think their peculiarities are. In this present work, in order to perceive the above, how the ethnic articulation of religious beliefs and practices are used as key to locating oneself in a social context has been deliberated.

METHODS

The data for the present study were collected by conducting extensive fieldwork in a predominantly Tamil Brahmin settlement in the heart of Howrah city, W.B. in two phases. In the first phase, the household census, genealogy of the lineal descendants, life histories etc. were collected. In the second phase, religious festivals like “Mahamayi Avishekam”, “Sri Rama Navami” etc. were studied in detail. The data were collected by being present in some of these festivals and observing in possible minute detail. Later, the recorded points were rechecked by interviewing of concerned individuals and groups.

From February 2007 until October 2007 I conducted thirty-one in-depth interviews with them, ranging in length from one hour to 90 minutes. I met approximately half of my respondents through contacts with community leaders and a subsequent snowball sample. Nineteen respondents were second-generation, four were 1.5 generation (immigrants who came here before age twelve), and two were more recently arrived immigrants. The rests were even older settlers. Respondents reported a diversity of jobs held either by them or their parents, who included mechanics, nurse aides, and doctors, managerial and clerical staffs at various Govt. and Private firms, and entrepreneurs. Finally, I visited community organizations like the local “South Indian Club”, including a campaign office, religious institutions, and youth groups. Interviews focused on constructions of their identities, through questions on their personal and professional lives, tastes (music, movies, and clothing), festivals, social networks, and ethnic identities.

During the course of fieldwork, I realized that a researcher embarked on such a project is challenged in various ways. In a nutshell, the ubiquitous becomes elusive, and the anthropologist, if he happens to be from other ethnic group, is suspected of secretly laughing at and mocking people, practices and objects. As difficult as it is to explain and carry out the anthropological project under normal circumstances, it became even more so under those in which I found myself. The constraining relational and material conditions set by my fields played an essential role in contextualizing my agency as an anthropologist (Kalir 2006).

REFLECTIONS

The speakers often introduced their thoughts by explaining Aiyar-Iyengar attitudes to me, an outsider to their society, or by explaining something of the turmoil they have been experiencing

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or something of particular issues they are facing. My narrators are aware that they are subjects of my study and that they are explaining themselves and their society to me.

One of my informants, Mr. Venkatesh*, was particularly seemed to be interested in teaching me the Tamil way of life and traditions. The fact that I'm a Bengalee and quite unacquainted with Tamil life style seemed to have made him determined to 'help' me in my fieldwork. He had rather definite views on who were the "right" Tamils there to interview. The right ones were usually those he considered more traditional and thus more Tamil-like, just like back in Tamilnadu. Hence I ended up with roughly speaking three groups of interviewees. The first group, the people I more or less bumped into during the first phase of my fieldwork, represented a rough cross-section of the Tamil settlement there. The second group, with whom I got acquainted whilst observing the religious festivals performed in the South Indian club, represented the generation of young adults who, I presumed, might have been most exposed to change and outside influence. The third group, the ones chosen by Mr. Venkatesh*, consisted of the more traditional and the older settlers, and represented a common image of what he seemed to think were the more "real" Tamil.

The attitudes of Tamil settlers towards me as a researcher varied. None of them refused to be interviewed but there were some who thought a person representing an academic discipline, and also from a different ethnic background, cannot grasp the spiritual atmosphere of their community. Despite explicit explanation of my profession and purposes, some of them regarded me suspicious and interrogated me (always politely) in order to decipher my 'real' intentions. Moreover, it seemed a bit inappropriate for me as a man to interview young Tamil girls. Thus, there is a slight gender distortion in my fieldwork material owing to the fact that males (both boys and men) were simply easier to reach as, at least I presume, it was more proper for me to interview men than women. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees were friendly and talkative during my interviews. Most of them felt genuinely eager and interested in contributing to my study, and I'm truly grateful for their help. After the first phase of fieldwork, it seemed almost everybody, including those whom I never met, knew who I was and what I'm doing. The settlement seemed to be closely knitted in such communication.

At this point one must be reminded of the crisis of representation in a humanistic discipline like anthropology. Obviously, in addition to not being able to communicate with my informants using their mother tongue, my own 'cultural baggage' of a Bengalee background, the personal background, affected my interpretation in the field and in the writing process. A researcher is not a remote observer but a part of the field of research. Thus the anthropologist must be aware of the significance of his role and the subjectivity of the research process".

Simply put, the Tamil settlers here were sometimes hard for me to understand and their arguments even harder, and thus no 'complete' and "perfect" interpretation was possible by me—or dare I say would be by anyone, not even if the researcher is willing to list personal properties that might or might not have affected his research. As Steedman says, knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (Steedman 1991), and I am aware of the fact that here this article deals with *my* knowledge of the Tamil settlement in central Howrah.

In my field site, most of the Tamils belong to middle income category. Here, most of the households are of Tamil Brahmins related to each other in some way or other. Some claiming to belong to immediately lower echelon to Brahmins in caste hierarchy were noticed too but none of the so called lower castes (whom I mostly found in and around Salkia, Howrah) were noticed there. At first, my times were spent doing informal chatting to make myself and them comfortable with each other. These informal talks with them also helped me to get illuminated about certain aspects of their lives and made it somewhat easier for me to comprehend their accents of Tamil terms in later stages as I got used to it. The realization that in order to be prompt, interviewer should be conversant with the variables and must be informed about local conditions and culture to judge authenticity of replies and not to offend anyway the sentiments of the people being studied so as not to jeopardize the whole study dawned on me during the study. These informal talks, that I had at the beginning of my study helped me immensely. Some generalities from these data were made but that these generalities are context dependent.

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY: SITES OF DIALOGICAL SELF-DEFINITION

The way in which cultural spectacles influence the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity is that they represent backdrops against which individuals and groups can participate in the so-called politics of identity. By now a certain scholarly consensus has emerged around the notion that individual and collective identities are articulated within or are dependent upon a kind of "dialogue" between conversational partners understood to occupy different positions within the overall social (or "discursive") system⁸.

It is often argued that boundaries are sustained because people remain confined to cultural spaces. Even when they immigrate, they retain their "cultural stuff" and do not surrender their individual cultural markers (Eriksen, 1993).ⁱⁱⁱ Given these deliberations, one many argue that ethnic identities are acquired and assumed through processes of cultural articulation and reinforced through repetitive calls to threat to survival of these identities. Boundaries are always drawn in interactive situations. They are never drawn in isolation. Referring Eriksen (1993) in this regard, religion then is a strong factor in boundary maintenance and it is one of the most important factors that draw distinction between "Chenthamil" (Pure Tamil) and "Kodunthamil" (impure Tamil)^{iv}.

While inquiring about the Tamil's own impression of them, some interesting points came to the fore. Respondents of each sex were asked not only about them but also on essential requirement of/for being a Tamil of opposite sex or how they would identify him/her as a Tamil. From these responses some generalities could be made. While for female of the sexes it ranged from wearing Saris 18 hand long, knowing all traditional festivals and traditions, drawing some geometric designs (traditionally known as 'kolam') at the doorstep every morning with rice paste and vermillion, having sacred yellow thread ("Mangalasutram") around the neck of every married Tamil woman to wearing flowers on the hair plait as part of decoration. For the man,

⁸(Taylor 1994; cf. Gamson 1997; Mato 1998; Willems-Braun 1994; Frideres 1978)

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it was sacred ash ('bivuti') smearing on forehead for Brahmins, wearing traditional dresses like "Dhoti" and "Angabastam" on festive and auspicious occasions etc. What seemed more interesting is that these responses revealed some stereotypical views not only about themselves but also of neighboring other ethnic groups.

In one such interaction Mrs. Balasundari Murthi*^v preferred to emphasize the fact that it is the respect a Tamil wife gets from her husband that makes the Tamil so unique in this whole world. She gave her own example. She teaches in a nearby private English medium school and has to report to service in early morning, i.e., at about 5:30 AM. Her husband also wakes up at that time and does his own work himself and helps her doing household chores. According to her, he never complained to her about these and always cooperates with her. He also discusses each and every important matter with her, be it financial or private and asks her opinion. Mrs. Murthi also told that

"It doesn't make him henpecked but rather an ideal husband who equally treats his wife. Whereas Bengalis treat their wives like second class citizens".

She even imitated how average Bengalee usually behave when it comes to the decision making by ordering the wife in the gruff voice -

"What are you doing here now? Can't you see we (the men-folk) are talking on a serious issue? Go and better make tea for us and leave us alone...."

She even cautioned me that like average Bengalee I should not bring a wife for doing household chores only and rather think of her as my better half (quite literally), whose pain might affect me too.

Some Other stereotypical notions of themselves also surfaced out in these interactions like every Tamil households being very particular on cleanliness, Tamils being punctual and disciplined, they retain the best of traditions and embrace the best of modernity. Some like Mr. S. Krishnan*, Mr. G. Raju*, and others even pointed out the fact that other communities, including Bengalee; recognize this fact about them in general. Mr. G. Raju provided an amusing anecdote to drive home this point. Back in the 1970s in his youth, once he was in dire need of cash for treatment of his ailing mother. He was still new in this area, which was then mostly populated by Bengalee. At that time, his Bengalee neighbor loaned that amount to him without taking anything against guarantee or against mortgage and said to him that he would rather do such thing for a South Indian (in general) than members of his own community as South Indians tend to be honest. Today, he is always ready to return the favour. Once in an interaction he mentioned names of Sukumar Ray and Satyajit Ray among his favourite authors, Netaji Subhas Bose as the greatest leader the country has ever produced. According to Mr. Raju, this mutual respect the two communities have for each other makes it possible to coexist in the same place peacefully for over half a century without a hitch.

All such stereotypical self ascriptions of identity were noted as they were told. However, there is more to identity construction than such ascriptions which are so ingrained to the member's psyche and their sense of belonging to the group that these are only expressed through some overt manifestations of activities, which in the most cases, are part of their lifestyle.

ARTICULATING BELIEFS AND NEGOTIATING SALIENCE:

Herberg's "Protestant Catholic Jew" (1955) placed identity and identification as key to locating oneself in a social context—in this case religion as the marker. Herberg said religion had become the most important tool for "locating oneself in society" and thereby answering the most "aching question" of identity: "Who am I?"^{vi} The Tamil immigrants in both the places (Salkia and Central Howrah) observe religious festivals throughout the year. The data collected on such festivals could be represented in following table:

Time	Festivals	Participation of Caste Groups
1. January	1. Pongal	All can participate. Only Brahmins perform the rite of Aditya Puja (Sun worship). Cow rite can be one by all. Kanum rite is performed more vigorously by Harijans or lower castes who sing and dance.
2. February	2. Sivaratri	A few of every group stay awake, but Beri-Chettiyars give more importance to this festival.
3. March	3. Karaday Nonbu	No Non-brahmin Caste groups participate in it.
4. March	4. Sri Rama Navami	No Non-brahmin Caste groups participate in it.
5. April	5. Tharpanam	No Non-brahmin Caste groups participate in it.
6. July	6. Avani Avittam	No Non-brahmin Caste groups participate in it.
7. July-August	7. Kur Utum Vila	An Amman (Mother goddess) festival performed with great elaboration at Mukkuntha Amman Temple In Tamilnadu traditionally. Here it is performed at local Mariamma Temple for five Sundays. All Non-brahmin Caste groups participate.
8. August	8. Krishna Jayanti	A few from almost every Caste group perform it. The Pattanavas of Central-Howrah perform it elaborately.

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9. August	9. Agni-utsavam	Traditionally held at Draupathi Amman Temples in Tamilnadu. Here at Central-Howrah a small place bordered with fence having a Copper Nose Ring in the middle is Considered Sacred.
10. August	10. Vinayakar Chaturthi	Non-brahmin performs it.
11. September	11. Mahalaya Amavasy	Ancestor Worship. A few of every Caste group except Lower Caste Villians perform it.
12. September	12. Navarathri	Nine days festival of Dolls. Ammans are decorated. Special lullaby rites are conducted for nine nights. Each night's expenses are borne by person who performs Upayam (Special Invocation). All Caste groups participate. On 9th day a rite, Ayuta Puja (Weapon Rite) is performed by Beri-chettiars.
13. September	13. Saraswati Puja	Nine day festival. Brahmins, Beri-chettiyar, Saliar perform it elaborately.
14. September-October	14. Puratasi Sani Kilamay	Special Bhajana Rites (Singing Religious Hymns)
15. October	15. Vaikunta Ekat Sesi	All participate in it.
16. October	16. Deepavali	All participate in it. Includes ritual bathing at Ganges.
17. October-November	17. Skanda-Puranam	Six day festival of Murugan. All participate in it.
18. November	18. Naga Chaturthi	Snake worship. People of lower ranked Caste groups participate in it.
19. December	19. Kartikay Thipam	Muruga worship. Few among all Caste groups do it.
20. December-January	20. Margali Bajanay	No Non-brahmin participate it. Special Bhajana rite is performed.

However, here the question is not how elaborately such festivals are performed but on how and why they are maintained in certain manners even when an immigrant group is settled on a distant, away from their homeland and how it helps in their group identity. *The belief is that the moral standard and values of Caste-groups are distinctive—that these standards and values are special privileges that have to be dramatized on religious or ceremonial occasions to reaffirm their Caste-identity.* This has been particularly noticed among the higher ranked Caste groups. Upon being questioned on why they maintain such festivals and what could be the consequence of not performing these occasions, several of my Brahmin informants unanimously agreed that they do it because they are Brahmin and this way they teach their children to maintain it *as an inevitable part of them being Tamil Brahmins.*

As introduced in the beginning one many argue that ethnic identities are acquired and assumed through processes of cultural articulation and reinforced through repetitive calls to threat to survival of these identities. Boundaries are always drawn in interactive situations. They are never drawn in isolation. Religion is a strong factor in boundary maintenance (Eriksen, 1993) and it is one of the most important factors that draw distinction between “Chenthamil” (Pure Tamil) and “Kodunthamil” (impure Tamil). Some case studies have been provided to clear the point in consideration a little more.

Case-1

Dr. K.S.* (41 years, Aiyar Brahmin) is a consultant anesthesiologist of a famous group of Hospitals at Rash Behari Avenue and Sarat Bose Road, Kolkata. After doing his MD, he completed his FRCA degree from London. Dr. K.S.* is a second generation Tamil settler who was born and brought up here. He provided an amusing anecdote on how he was regarded as Bengali while studying in Medical College by other Bengali friends. According to him, it was only at the end of year when he had to fill up some forms that his friends saw him filling up a provided space as Tamil Brahmin and were astonished that he never looked like a Tamil or spoke like that.

Dr. K.S.* is a regular participant at Bhajana singing rituals and in many cases that I have seen, he leads the chorus singing. He (along with Mr. S.S. Raman*, his brother in law) is the official Bhajana-in-charge. Dr. K.S.* always makes it a point to be present at any festival the South Indian Club holds. In numerous occasions he had to take part in Bhajana singing directly on his way back from hospital and he could be easily distinguished with his western attire and mobile phone hanging from neck amidst other singers who are mostly ‘Bivuti’ smeared on upper torso and wearing ‘Dhoti’. According to him it is the ‘Bhakti’ (reverence) that counts and not attires. He could not maintain the usual routine of being a Tamil Brahmin like doing ‘Achamanam’ (chanting sacred mantra or hymns before eating) as he eats in restaurants or canteens etc. and has to do many unpleasant things because of his profession. But taking part in Bhajan is easier for him and it brings him a kind of mental peace as he thinks it somehow negates the bad elements in his life. It also makes him more acceptable and honoured to his fellow Tamils. Later he also confided as most Bhajan singing are done after

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sunset, he could always bring out time after his professional duty gets over. Earlier the club celebrated 5 to 6 festivals but now it celebrates about 53 festivals a year. According to Dr. K.S.*, the members hardly meet in club except Sunday evenings. But when the club celebrates something, it is mandatory for members to be present at it and to donate liberally for the occasion. This mandatory presence makes it possible for the Tamil here to meet and spend quality time with each other and this strengthens internal cohesion and bonding.

Case-2

Mrs. Alamelu Ganeshan*, wife of Mr. K. Ganeshan*, has been residing in the area since her marriage. Before that, she was in Jamshedpur with her parents. A typical day for her starts with chanting the names of God, first thing in the morning after she wakes up at about 4:30 am. Then she (and so does each one of her family members) looks at the palm of their hands and chants:

*“Kar agre basate Laxmi,
Kara mule Saraswati,
Kara madhay Sri Govindan
Probhate Kara darshanam”.*

[The Goddess of wealth resides at tip of fingers, /The Goddess of learning at the end of fingers.
/at the middle resides God Sri Govindan /see every morning this resident of Gods and Goddesses].

She learnt it from her parents and she says that most of the Tamils do this. On being asked the rationale or significance behind the tradition, she said at first that remembering Gods first thing in morning makes her day lucky. Later she told me every one's destiny lies in his/her palm/hand. One earns bread by labour and one learns through writing—both of which require hand.

“Gods are always with you in your hand, it is how you choose to appease them that matters.”

Doing one's own things on his own and working hard ensures harmonious living. God is never going to help one if he lies idle. So by chanting their names in morning, you are not only requesting them to help you but you are also reminding yourself that the proper way of propitiating them is working honestly and hard.

She told me after this that she worships the idol of Muruga and then goes through her daily routine. Apart from celebrating festivals in due time, she does not do anything other than worshipping Goddess Laxmi on Friday. However, in another such conversation, she told me that whenever she faces any difficulty in her life, she closes her eyes and chants—

*“Asaddhya sadhaka swami
thava kim vadaha
Ram doota kripa sindho
Math karyam sadhaya prabho”.*

[O the one making even impossible a possibility, /Give your blessings to me. /O the messenger of God Rama, /Make my work possible.]

She chants it addressing Lord Hanuman and then goes about her work and she says that it works to her advantage every time. She gave me an example. She is working in a nearby 'Rakhi'^{vii} factory for the past 7 years. About 2 years ago, she wanted a raise and decided to approach the authority. Before her a colleague also went there for raise but she was turned down and humiliated. So Mrs. Ganeshan was apprehensive at first. But she decided to go anyway. She said that before going she chanted this *mantra* and felt confident about the whole issue. By God's grace, though at first she was turned down, her superiors reconsidered the decision and she was given a raise. According to her, the Tamil are religious by nature and it is the faith in God that makes them able to sustain themselves in any situations.

Case-3

One of the oldest settler of the area, Mr. G. R. Viswanathan* (72 years, Aiyar Brahmin), also one of the three permanent trustees of "South Indian Association", told me about the history of the Tamil settlement here.

As he claimed, it was here in this area that the South Indians first settled. At that time the whole area or almost all of it was owned by two brothers—Ashu Bose and Tarapada Bose. They were the Zamidars here. But after independence when rules on land ceiling came into place, they decided to sell their landed properties. The South Indians, who till that time resided here as tenants, moved towards Bow Bazar area as they could not manage to buy the property here. Thereafter they moved towards Bhawanipur then to Lake Market—South Calcutta area and now they have dispersed to many other areas too.

According to him, the number of Tamil families in this settlement has been recorded in the club log book from the 1960's. He provided an account of the number of Tamil families in the area in every decade from 1970's. While in 1970, the total no. of Tamil families in the area was 17, it grew up to 26 in 1980. The number rose to 43 in 1990 and in 2007, it rests at 52 families of Tamil in the area. The club maintains close relations with other such associations such as 'Vedanta House' of South Calcutta and helps other Tamils new to the city in finding easy accommodation. Earlier the club celebrated about 5 to 6 festivals but now it celebrates about 53 festivals a year. He plays the pivoting role of coordinator in such endeavors. According to him, such festivals provide the members an opportunity to interact with one another under the same umbrella. He is also one of the key Bhajana singers in all such occasions. Once I happened to ask him his opinions on religious festivals observed here and in Tamilnadu. According to him, the club South Indian Association here has much bigger role to play in fulfilling religious commandments. He feels that as the senior most among the patriarchs, his duty and obligations towards abiding by the traditions is more. In all these conversations the impression that was presented seemed to me to be of a senior figure who considers it his duty to shepherd the younger lot to the right path in a place which is far away from their homeland. While in Tamilnadu, it might not have been his headache as that duty would have been performed by the community itself, here in alien surrounding where younger generation is more susceptible and vulnerable to the risk of forgetting their own roots, somebody has to take it upon himself to set the right example.

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That religion acts as a marker of ethnic identity has been discussed by Brass (1991), Barth (1969), and others. In this present study, the following issues emerged as significant—

- (a) While the maintenance of religious orthodoxy outwardly may be justified in association with penance or to gain confidence, inwardly it points to a sense of supremacy associated with notions of purity and pollution.
- (b) That such celebrations give a sense of belonging to the group and thereby extends cohesion and mutual understanding among the members.
- (c) Such celebration means repeated interaction among group members and spending time with each other and gossiping. It thereby creates a vast network not only among kin group but among non kin members also (as is the case with helping Tamils new to the city in finding accommodation) that leads to solving of many other problems.

To the question “What is your group identity”—a Tamil may answer by identifying himself as Tamil, his Caste-name or Caste-title, his language, occupation, religious or political affiliations etc. Depending on the context and who the questioner is, the answer would vary. An individual has a coherent system of self and group identity. But what this system does is to enable the individual to employ and deploy multiple identities in his lifetime and in different experiential contexts. In other words, there is no set pattern of identities that remain static by which an individual identifies himself. The individual knows what appropriate identity is to dramatize, and knows how to respond to the dramatization of the appropriate identity by others. This knowing comes from internalization of symbols of respective cultural boundaries, and their significance comes from their use. The use also verifies the validity of symbols.

CONCLUSION

In short, religious spectacles may facilitate the presentation of dramatic performances of identity directed not only by, but also *at themselves* in order to tell a certain kind of story about what it might mean for individuals and groups to combine within themselves various identities (Tamil, Indian, first generation, second generation, rural, urban, local, global, etc.). Since more and more generations of children born in Howrah lack an unmediated personal memory or experience of another (i.e., neither Bengali nor Hindi) language, religion, or entirely Tamil place, regular performances of identity are crucial means of perpetuating or recreating a particular identity in immigrant Tamil community. By encouraging ethnic communities to re-enact and re-experience concentrated versions of a particular ethnic identity in a public (and even ritualistic) manner, religious festivals such as mentioned above exemplify the form of “Tamilism” that encourages conversational partners to speak from specific discursive locations. Scholars may argue that the identities celebrated in such festivals are reified, whereas identity is also (or, according to some, only) dynamic, constructed, and “processual”⁹. However, we should not overlook the reasons (different in each case) that communities choose to depict themselves in one way and not another^{viii}. In short, if identity emerges dialogically, cultural spectacles may be one way to provide minority groups with opportunities to engage the

⁹(Baumann 1999)

assumptions held by their discursive partners, and in so doing, to influence their own and their partners' identities. While certain aspects did seem to experience or evidence processes of secularization, the pervasive disenchantment that was forecast by secularization theorists has not come to pass.

New environments may challenge the meaning or value of an identity. Breakwell (1986) describes a variety of situations, including the loss of employment, and cultural conflicts, that pose threats to identity. If severe enough, threats can call into question the very existence of an identity. Immigration in itself might not act as an active agent or threat but subsequent adaptation to new milieu which influences and feeds man's inherent urge get accepted in surrounding cultural milieu in turn igniting a retaliating stride towards orthodoxy.

Culture, as defined, is not a coherent organized set of symbols but a repertoire of symbols that is accumulated over time in man's interaction with environment. The human beings, who inherit access to a particular repertoire, are constantly engaged in "active, self conscious construction of cultural systems and they draw selectively on their culture's repertoire of symbols, never using all the symbols available". (Pandian, 1987).

When one tries to blend the above two with ideas of ethnicity, one can say that all human beings are engaged in an 'active, self-conscious' attempt to construct definitions of who they are as a people. In their cultural reservoir are symbols of people hood. These available symbols construct 'ethnicity'—the symbols of 'cultural boundary' (Barth, 1969).

In this present work, the whole concept of ethnicity appears as a conglomeration of religious symbols which embody the cognitive and emotive cultural boundaries of a group. The idea of "Chenthamil" (pure Tamil) depends on ritual or religious symbols that evoke certain imageries while their celebration and maintenance of orthodoxy has hints of political strategy to convey a sense of supremacy and distinctiveness of an immigrant group.

Barth (1969) in his construction of "ethnic boundaries" prefers to use the term polyethnic instead of multi-ethnic. India with its diverse populations, regional differences, linguistic and multi religious character *if* can be considered as a polyethnic society, the same cannot be claimed about a person's group identity because of complex play of stereotyped clusters as characteristic of one single identity. On being asked—"what is your group identity?" a Tamil may answer by identifying his caste title or caste name, his language, occupation, religious or political affiliation. Depending on the context and who the questioner is, the answer would vary.

It is ironic that even as we try to deny, mostly as patriotic gesture that we are "Indians first and foremost and Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Tamil or Bengali etc. later" (the most often repeated answer to my queries), we do sustain and nurture with enormous amount of jealousy our primary identities and subsequently boundaries associated with these identities. In an effort to remind ourselves about our sub-conscious or conscious boundaries, we often play ritualistic tribute to cultural traits that tell us— "we are different". It can be dress, language etc. Each of these is a symbolic and essential attribute to ascertain of our status in society that is essentially polyethnic.

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Mehta (1989) made similar assertion whereby a case was made for examining 'core' and 'peripheral' identities while discussing multiple identities experienced by people belonging to diverse communities in India^{IX}. As for example, when the Bengali neighbours were asked on their Tamil neighbours, it was clear that for the outsiders, a few tokens of identity usually sufficient that are mainly stereotypical versions. But it is more rigorously judged within a group and this sentiment helps in ethnic network formations as discussed. Thus while individual histories might be forgotten, the 'Strong' and 'Weak' ties of network are created on the basis of immigrant group's history and shared common heritage that helps to maintain their 'core' identity even after its "assimilation" to other groups in some other criteria.

Suggestions for further research

Further research might be necessary in this field to explore the dynamics of perception between boys and girls of the same ethnic settlers. Within the Tamil settlement I studied, young men, and women showed a remarkable facility with the myriad cultural tool kits available to them. Listening to music from South India, the contemporary western, and the Bengali, as well as many hybrid styles is just one example of how they maintain multiple aspects and *influences* on their identities. In other aspects of their identities, however, these young men and women exhibit quite distinct identities. Girls are more interested in many things mainstream Indian, especially Hindi movies. Boys, on the other hand, distance themselves from a mainstream 'North Indian' identity. Hence although both young Tamil men and women of this settlement craft multivalent identities, gender plays an important role in some of the choices that they make about ethnic boundaries. The gender differences arise from different degrees of peer-based symbolic capital associated with Tamil male identity and Tamil female identity in urban mainstream Indian youth culture today.

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NOTES

¹ Waters (1999) is a notable exception. In *Black Identities*, Waters describes differences between second-generation West Indians' ethnic identities depending on whether they live in largely African American neighbourhoods—leading to African American identity—or mixed areas—leading to West Indian ethnic identity

¹¹ One way to approach the problem of subjectivity has been to openly admit its existence and bring in the person of the researcher as a part of the study. Thus, since 1980s, self-reflection, writing out the experiences of fieldwork and contemplating its relation to the writing process have emerged as new tools of coping with subjectivity.

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^{III} Paul Brass in his "Ethnicity and Nationalism" (1991) writes:

"Ethnic identity formation is viewed as a process that involves three sets of struggles. One takes place within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources, which in turn involves defining the group's boundaries and its rules for inclusion and exclusion. The second takes place between ethnic groups as a competition for right, privileges, and available resources. The third takes place between the state and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the populations that inhabit its territory." Again in his "Ethnic Groups and the State" (1985) he asserts:

"Most sociological theories.... Focus on society as a whole and take as their main theoretical issue the conditions for conflict or cohesion, national integration or internal war and treat the societal unit – interest groups, classes, or ethnic groups—as given rather than as objects for examination themselves. Too often neglected is the issue of how identity and cohesion within groups are formed and maintained in the first place, how political mobilization of group occurs, and how and why both group cohesion and mobilization often decline." (Brass, 1985).

^{IV} Linguistically, 'Chenthamil' means traditional orthodox Tamil language and 'Kodunthamil' means colloquial Tamil language. My fieldwork was based on two Tamil settlements in Howrah. The settlement described here consisted mostly of Tamil Brahmins, while the other settlement was of low caste groups engaged in menial works. Once in an interaction with a middle aged Tamil housewife, she referred the other settlement 'Kodunthamil'.

^V All star marked names changed on request to respect privacy.

^{VI} Another question that seemed important is a corollary to the first one, "Who are mine?" The identification of like people is often associated with stereotypical notions about Us and Them. The stereotypical self ascription of identity was noted as they were told. However, there is more to identity construction than such ascriptions which are so ingrained to the member's psyche and their sense of belonging to the group that these are only expressed through some overt manifestations of activities, which in the most cases, are part of their lifestyle. W. Herberg's (1955) work in these regard that focused on strategic significance of religion and related activities of immigrant group to locate itself in social context could be cited as an example.

^{VII} Rakhi is a predominantly North Indian festival in which sisters tie decorated thread on the wrist of their brothers.

^{VIII} Halter describes the way Irish tourists are surprised by the elaborate nature of post-1970s St. Patrick's Day celebrations (and Irish pride and nationalism) in the United States. In response, Irish people have expanded on their own St. Patrick's Day festivities to accommodate the expectations of American tourists to Ireland. Halter argues that such American festivals reflect the weakening of social and geographic ties and the transformation of communal memories of the homeland (2000:160-168).

^{IX} She argued: "Various religious, cultural, and linguistic diversities occupying the Indian sub continent are not crowds... They have their respective histories and many other intra-community commonalities—the sense of belonging which keeps the members of these communities together irrespective of their geographical placements is termed as 'core identity'."

Address for correspondence: Avik Roy, Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET), Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, 35, Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata-700019.
E-mail : avikgood@gmail.com

CASTE, SPACE, SYMBOLS AND POWER : A STUDY OF THE BRAHMAN AND OTHER CASTES IN AN URBAN ENCLAVE OF WEST BENGAL

Pinaki Dey Mullick*

Abstract: The study on caste and politics in urban India, though not new to Anthropology, needs renewable attention to many yet unexplored issues of Indian city life, especially in the face of contemporary structural and cultural changes. The present ethnography purposively selects the Barendra Brahmans of *Raghupatitala*, a well-known urban locality in the Howrah district of West Bengal to portray how the Brahmans settlers since their last twelve generations repositioned themselves within the traditional social organization. They have also used the traditionally privileged position and markers for maintaining their dominance over the area. Besides the fact that the growing urbanization has weakened the rigid control of caste dominance, the present study has unearthed some factional dynamics at intra- and inter- group interactions of the residential castes. The Barendra Brahmans exert their preponderance to sustain control over the local political and religious spheres by excluding others, who are low in the traditional caste ranking. The tools of long ethnographic fieldwork were participant observation, depth interviews, group interviews, case studies, genealogical understanding, structured and semi-structured interviews. Precisely the work seeks to ensure the nature of caste and politics in an urban context to show the pattern of creating and recreating the meaning of identity within a cultural space at the metropolitan periphery of Kolkata.

The dimensions of viewing and operation of caste alluded to and inter-linked in the discussion below appear as coalescence among the Brahman caste of a 'modern' space of politics in an urban setting, where the present work took place. The present ethnographic profile

- (a) is a reflection of the one means of modernity, especially in an urban space to incorporate caste into its local democratic fold of sustaining the identity of polity in balance;
- (b) may define the 'space' in terms of changing configuration of social and cultural capital,
- (c) is an enforcement of aggressive control over local power,
- (d) may be viewed as a sort of ethnicization of caste in urban ways of exercising them,
- (e) shows paradoxical uses of religious/ideological supremacy over the other locally non-dominant castes.

CASTE : A CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

Caste, as a form of social stratification holds the key to the lives of the people (K. Johnson and M. Karlberg, 2005)¹. It is an integral part of the Indian society, culture and politics. There are anthropologists and sociologists who view caste from the standpoint of religious and symbolic

*Guest lecturer in Anthropology, Bangabasi College, Kolkata

¹Caste systems are found in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific and even in North America

ideas, which designates certain caste higher than the others, based on the notions of purity and pollution. Caste is interpreted as an ideological framework to formulate a social order. On the other hand, the materialists interpret caste as a structured social divide among segments of society based on the wealth of different social groups. The higher castes are generally wealthier or in better position to get more access to resources than the other castes. Such ideology is formulated by religion that legitimates this social-division. Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* is one of the most influential contributions to the study of Caste in India. Dumont interprets the principle of hierarchy as "the attribution of a rank to each element in relation to the whole" (Dumont 1988, 91 as quoted by Quigley 23). The ranking being religious in nature is supposed to derive a consensus of values regarding hierarchy in traditional societies (ibid 24). Dumont's principle of hierarchy is pivoted on the opposition between purity and pollution, which corresponds to the notions of superiority and inferiority. (Quigley 1993 25-26). Dumont's theory of caste is an attempt to find reasons behind the monopoly and superior status that Brahmins enjoy in the religious domain. M.N. Srinivas criticized Dumont for his assumption of the existence of homology between *varna* and *jati*. According to Srinivas, there are two models of caste system operating in India—*varna* and *jati* and there exists certain differences between the two systems. Srinivas refutes Dumont's theory by pointing out that in some areas, the dominant castes are highly Sanskritized and show respect to Brahmins.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the anthropology of caste in India underwent through a radical revision (Natarajan, 2006). Fuller and Spencer (1990) mentioned that the decline of the 1970s of the 'village studies' model of Indian anthropology enabled a shift of focuses from the caste and caste system towards other and larger structures, such as class, region or space and the areas of caste violence. Scholars like Cohn, Inden and Nicholas, Dirkes have argued that caste is a colonialist imperial design to strengthen their power over the native Indians. (Inden 1986; Cohn 1987; Dirkes 2002). "Caste was not a single logic for categorization and identity. Regional, village, residential and temple communities, territorial groups, lineage segments, occupational groups were other significant units of identification. Social identity was importantly political and political affiliations decided the way caste was organized in pre-colonial India." (Dirkes 2002, 13). But the gradually fading maintenance of the hierarchic discourse in rapidly modernising India was re-informed by scholars like Chris Fuller, M.N. Srinivas and Andre Bataille. They tried to point out grossly that the elimination of hierarchical values from legitimate public discourse does not negate the existence of caste. They argue that caste as an empirical fact of social change has been altered and transformed its meaning over the years. Andre Bataille while discussing caste identities observes that the meaning and legitimacy of caste has changed significantly in urban spaces.

Contemporary evidence indicates that caste identities cannot be simplistically seen within an unrelenting hierarchical grid where the status of the pure and the impure are empirically and unproblematically firm in their interactional nexus (see Gupta 2000a, pp. 54–85). Long ago it was noticed by Senart, Bougle, and Blunt. Senart (1930) argued that castes should be seen as units, not essentially always operating within a hierarchic arrangement.

Caste, Space, Symbols and Power

The study of caste and politics can be analytically justified only when castes are, first and foremost, discrete entities with ideological heritage. As they are discrete phenomena, it is both rationally and empirically true that there should be multiple hierarchies as each caste always overvalues itself. The element of caste competition is, therefore, a characteristic of the caste order and not a later addition (Gupta 2000a, pp. 55–82). In compliance with the changing configuration of castes as units and even as in a system, the scholars started to envisage caste in terms of the strategic process of ethnicization. The word “ethnicity” is hardly foreign to academic writings on India. Writing also in 1975, Stephen Barnett likened the modern transformations of caste to *ethnicization* (1975: 158-9). David Washbrook treats religion, regionalism/language, and caste as important sources of “the symbols of ethnicity,” suggesting that the persistence of such politics as well as their “ineffective[ness] in directing the course of modern Indian history” are in different ways marks of Indian modernity (1989: 174). In analyzing the local caste politics, Mukherjee (2000) shows relationship between caste and class structures. To him, the concept of ‘dominant caste’ is actually a platform in which the caste structure has increasingly articulated itself with in a ‘modern’ class structure. He further responded that, the new form of class structure has created the alternative alliances of caste in its changing milieu, especially in metropolitan cities.

Therefore, there is always a need for emphasizing on the ways modernity in India adjusts and incorporates castes within its corpus with no limit of the means, by which it may do so. As mentioned before, Beteille (1996) points out especially among the professional that the middle class intelligentsia, the nature of castes have changed even more, that differs radically from its counterpart of the countryside and the rural areas of the past. The Urban professional intellectuals show an ambivalent attitude towards castes. Modern India is a status conscious world, and the criteria of status distinctions are based mainly on education, occupation or income, social and other cultural capital. In urban centers, the interaction of castes lies in an ambiguous contradiction. The subjective thinking on ‘caste action’ is therefore difficult to understand in reference to its variability and inconsistency. After independence, the concept of caste was directly ascertained its relation with power structure. The traditional upper castes were engaged to rule the local political structures in many parts of India (Hassan, 2000 and Jaffrelot, 2003). In politics, the significance of caste is gaining importance day by day. The democratic politics results an aggressive attitudes of caste in modern India (Jayaram, 1996). At present Caste is much more active in local political structures irrespective of its role in family and occupational ideology (Beteille 1996). The nature of caste politics today replaced the concept of ‘caste hierarchy’ by ‘caste democracy’ (Kaviraj 2000, p. 104). That does not mean that, the politicization of caste is new, but in recent era, the concept of democracy and commerce have changed the pattern of caste politics in India (Gupta, 2000). Thus caste entity is changing its motion and directions as an instrument for social change (Weiner, 2002). The political power of the dominant caste groups ensures their holdings on the local wealth and this power, however, frequently creates a ‘horizontal’ solidarity within and between dominant castes but sometimes it is weakened by their competitive attitudes (Brass, 1990, 1997). By the horizontal solidarity of the dominant caste/s, might generally occupy a massive

control over the power structure within a given local space. The organization of various caste groups with specific spatial 'locus' has produced two political effects - a) The rise and extension of 'locally dominant' caste and b) the political result of caste loci relate to electoral politics, i.e. the candidates of a particular caste will always get elected from certain areas (Palshikar, 2000). Following the idea of Palshikar, 'region' or 'space' is therefore one of the key factor for studying caste and politics in India. He attempted to define space as a non-territorial, non-physical sphere, just as it would be in physical territory. Multidimensional perspectives of interrelation among caste, polity and space yield some basic features, like, issues are or may have become region specific; leadership is structured regionally; in electoral and mobilization contexts, the set of choices are region specific and political competition takes place at regional level. Thus, there is a complex relationship between caste and space—a relationship of interdependence, caste expresses through regions. Again, regions become politically sustainable on the basis of caste; caste is bound up by territoriality and in constituting the social space by creating and recreating its meaning symbolically.

THE METHODS

The work at Raghupatitala purposively focused on the specific phenomenon of the democratic and traditional control over the space by the Barendra (migrated from *Barendra* land of present Bangladesh) Brahmans since Independence. The fieldwork sustained for over two and a half months at the end of 2006. It was an intensive discourse of interviews and observation on sixteen families, principally based on depth interviews, case studies, semi-structured interviews, genealogical and other observations.

RAGHUPATITALA: A SPACE FOR POLITICS OF CASTES

By name, it is clear to us that the Barendras are not the original inhabitants of this place. They are immigrated groups, but their roots of immigration and expansion are not free from local controversies. Since the time of spreading out over the area, they nourished a feeling of superiority over others by means of their ethos. In 'Raghupatitala', the researcher observed some factional attitudes among the in-migrant Barendra Brahmans themselves and between them and lineages of other previously settled castes. Being one of the most urbanized areas, Raghupatitala is dominated by the Barendras, whose principal lineages of 'Chowdhury', 'Bhattacharya', 'Sanyal', 'Roy', 'Bhaduri', 'Lahiri', and 'Maitra' are inhabiting with the other caste groups like, 'Tili', 'Kyasthas', 'Goalas' etc. It is at the same time, a space, where the Barendras are genealogically linked with each other, resulting in the strong social networking of kinship. It is observed that, in 'Chowdhuri para' of Raghupatitala, 51.42% belongs to the 'Barendra Brahmans' and 48.57% to the other castes respectively. This exhibits that the 'Barendras' are preponderant over others. There exists a healthy competition among the 'Barendras' to put a hold on the local power structure by different means. The prosperity and popularity of this place is centered on a famous temple-'Raghupati Mandir', which was initiated by the Barendras. Gradually they became the dominant group of the area with reference to the famous temple and hold the key to power, which subordinated the other caste groups

in that locality. The exclusion of other caste groups from the traditional power structure leads to a factional tendency among them. The work is an attempt to unfold the factional attitudes in different spheres, especially in the domain of politics and religion.

Modern Democracy and the Castes: Political sphere is intimately related with religion in Raghupatitala. A socially sanctioned political structure developed as “Raghupatitala Achhi Parshad” (‘Raghupatitala’ Committee) to control and systematize the famous ‘Rampuja’ and for the welfare of the area. This committee is still performing its leading functions as a local political organization. The discussions of the respective affairs of the committee are held in a committee room, located just beside the image of ‘Raghupati’ in ‘Raghupati’ temple. The most significant feature of this committee is its membership. Since the Committee got its recognition as a systematic body to look over all the affairs, related with ‘Raghupati’ temple, its membership was restricted by the Barendras for Brahmans only, which is prevalent till date. No members of other castes are allowed to join here.

A strict rule of ‘Raghupatitala’ Committee to include the local M.L.A. in to the committee made all the previous M.L.A. and present (2006) M.L.A. also the members of the same. The indirect enforcing condition to accept the dominance of Brahmans in democratic people’s representation was challenged in the year 1987, when a non-Barendra became selected as the M.L.A. and continued his leadership to 1991. It was the most striking feature that being an M.L.A., he was not allowed in ‘Raghupatitala’ Committee as he was a member from non-Barendra Committee. He had to nominate a representative from ‘Barendra’ group selected as a member of the same. This phenomenon is a partial reflection of the factional motivations of the groups assigned.

RELIGION

In the religious sphere, the researcher has seen the cases of factional dynamics also. The image of the great ‘Raghupati’ contains a symbolic identity of local political conflict. The platform of the image of ‘Raghupati’ shows an interesting feature; the idol of *Debi* ‘Saraswati’, is placed just above the head of the image of ‘Raghupati’. This placement has a local history. Once upon a time, the local boys played different games in that place, where now the image of the great ‘Raghupati’ is situated. The boys also arranged a ‘Saraswati Puja’ every year in that place. When Sri Ajodhya ram chowdhury (the founder of the ‘Raghupati’ temple) wished to set the image of the ‘Raghupati’ in the mentioned area, the conflicts began between Sri Ahodhyaram Chowdhury and the local boys. The conflict was resolved by a mutual understanding i.e. ‘Devi Saraswati’ must be placed above the ‘Raghupati’ and at the day of ‘Saraswati Puja’, the bamboo, needed for making the image of the ‘Raghupati’ will be cut down. This has become a norm of the place.

The present researcher has explored cases of conflict between two great ‘Barendra’ Brahman lineages i.e. the ‘Chowdhury’ Lineage and the ‘Bhattacharya’ Lineage. An illustration can be made in this regard— a ‘Durga Puja’ was arranged by the ‘Bhattacharyas’ in a ‘Jamindari’ manner. They decided to immerse the image of ‘Debi Durga’ in to the pond of the ‘Chowdhries’ but the ‘Chowdhries’ disagreed and strictly opposed. A mutual agreement was

set as— the 'Bhattacharyas' had to place the image of 'Debi Durga' in the 'Uthan' (Courtyard) of the 'Chowdhury' family. Then the female folk of 'Chowdhury' family will make 'Barana' to 'Debi Durga', and next the 'Bhattacharyas' will be able to immerse the image in to the pond of The 'Chowdhuries'.

At the day of 'Ram Vijaya' (immersion of the great 'Raghupati'), another form of the domination of the 'Barendras' is noticed. Before the immersion of the great idol various rituals are performed there, like, 'Hom', 'Arati', etc. including the 'Barana' of the image of the 'Raghupati'. The 'Barana' is a significant ritual to indicate 'Barendra' domination of the area. It is done firstly by the female-folk of the 'Barendra' Brahman families, and then is open for all. Thus in religious sphere, some factional attitude is still performed by the 'Barendra' Brahmans in between them and with other castes respectively, though finally reinforcing the Brahman's control over the significant symbolic aspects of culture.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The factional attitudes are found in so many other events like, other traditional castes like 'Seth' (Tili), and 'Kar' (Kayastha), who are also financially dominant and hold the commerce of the place 'Raghupatitala', are not allowed to enter in 'Raghupatitala Committee', but they formed another organization of their own, with other caste members in the form of 'Raghupatitala Club'. This organization also maintains many important duties during 'Ram Puja' and at the day of 'Ram Vijaya'. This authority also performs other welfare activities as well. The 'Seths' and 'Kars', have contributed enough financial support to the welfare of 'Raghupatitala', but they are not as famous as the 'Barendras' are. One example can be cited in this regard- one of the famous School of Howrah, 'Maheshnath' Institution (established at. 1925) of 'Raghupatitala' is named after the great personality of the 'Bhattacharya' family, Sri Maheshnath Bhattacharya. The 'Seths' contributed maximum land for the construction of the Institution, but after a primary construction of the school, there were shortage of money to construct the roof of the School. At that particular time, Sri Debendranath Bhattacharya, agreed to give the money for the same, but the name of the School was agreed to go after his father's name i.e. Sri Maheshnath Bhattacharya. The authority agreed and the school was named as 'Maheshnath Institution', under which only a block was devoted in the name of the 'Seths'.

CONCLUSION

The castes are changing its nature and expressions within and can adapt to the dynamic spectrum of urban India. In such ethnicisation of a group of castes of the segmented nature of the system may function to use factional struggle for status and power, keeping wealth relatively in the backseat. The present research shows that 'Raghupatitala' may be recognized as a 'space', which provides the context to maintain the strong sense of in-group sentiment among the 'Barendras' through controlling a dominant attitude in local political and religious spheres. The 'Barendra' Brahmans maintain their boundary of networks primarily through endogamy (though the exceptions are not rare) within Brahmans and rigorously try to override the other caste groups. The other caste groups are trying to find out the alternative ways

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to cope up with the local political authority by participating in the social duties and communicating with the residents of that place through the welfare programs. The segmented system of caste society gradually becomes more competitive, perhaps in response to urban industrial 'modernity', which are manifested symbolically in almost all the effective spheres of the studied local space.

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Addrees for correspondence: Pinaki Dey Mullick, Guest lecturer In Anthropology, Bangabasi College, Kolkata. E-mail : p.deymullick@gmail.com